■ **News / A7**

Crash delays disaster plan for Aurora, Quezon areas

■ **Entertainment / A28**

TV ratings showdown pumps up Cebu City

■ **Across / A15**

'Jueteng' spells trouble for cop chief

■ **Business / B1**

DOF cool to exempting wage earners from tax

■ **World / A8**

Car bomb attack kills 25 Iraq mourners

Gun ban crusader still a man on fire

By Luige del Puerto

ANTIGUN crusader Nandy Pacheco was 9 years old when he took part in the Death March, a tortuous 100-km walk that killed thousands of Filipinos and Americans during World War II.

He toddled off with family members and

GUN BAN/ A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

DOJ won't charge Abat for 'old man's ranting'

By Armand N. Nocum

HE MAY have triggered a security alert, but the Department of Justice says it will treat former Defense Secretary Fortunato Abat with leniency because of his age.

DOJ/ A4

'WAG NANG PATULAN YAN!

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EDWIN BACASMAS

MARKET SURVEY

President Macapagal-Arroyo talks fish prices with a vendor during an inspection at the Marikina City public market. With her are Mayor Marides Fernando and Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap.

Employers open to ₱30 wage hike

Offer way below labor demand

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Jerome Aning and Philip C. Tubeza

A KILO of the cheapest rice and a can of sardines.

These are what workers can buy with the pay increase that employers are willing to give following President Macapagal-Arroyo's order on Labor Day to raise the minimum wage in 30 days.

An official of a major business organization, who requested anonymity, said businesses were willing to raise the minimum wage by P25 to P30 a day, equivalent to 8.3 to 10 percent of the current minimum pay of P300 in Metro Manila.

But the official said any amount bigger than this would force businesses to scale down or stop operations.

He said the P25-P30 wage increase was halfway between the P15 offered by capitalists and the P50 demanded by Ms Arroyo during their various meetings a few weeks before Labor Day.

The P25-P30 wage increase offered by employers, however, was considerably lower than the P78 across-the-board increase being sought by the moderate Trade Union Congress of the Philippines and the P125 demanded by the militant Kilusang Mayo Uno.

Workers have been clamoring for higher wages amid the unabated rise in fuel prices and the resulting increases in the prices of basic goods and services.

The minimum wage of P300 a day in Metro Manila is already way below the P663 family living wage for March estimated by the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC). The estimated living wage applies to a family of six, according to the NWPC.

Outside the metropolis, the minimum wage ranges from P159 to P250 a day.

Businessmen interviewed by

EMPLOYERS/ A19

3 bishops join clamor for gov't change

By Christian V. Esguerra

NOW, SOME Catholic bishops also want President Macapagal-Arroyo out.

Three members of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) belonging to a multisectoral group yesterday lashed out at the President in the wake of the heightened suffering of Filipinos.

"We would like to remind the [Arroyo] administration that time is running out and that no force on earth can ever stop the coming deluge of change as the pent-up emotions of our poor suffering people [are] about to explode," said a statement read by Bishop Julio Xavier Labayen.

Labayen's group, the Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya (KME), said it would lead a "national day of mourning and protest" on June 12 should the President ignore its call for an immediate "change in system."

The group took Ms Arroyo to task for the surging fuel prices and water and power rates, and several tax measures intended largely for debt servicing.

"If the people responsible for these would not budge, people would clamor for change and we cannot stop them," Caloocan Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez said at a press conference.

"We might even ask for such changes for the good of our country," Iñiguez said.

Novaliches Bishop Antonio Tobias said his fellow bishops based in Metro Manila had al-

3 BISHOPS/ A19

Rival politicos heed call for unity meet

By Michael Lim Ubac and TJ Burgonio

POLITICIANS on both sides of the trench yesterday heeded Speaker Jose de Venecia's call for unity talks but some stressed that the aim should not be to save the Arroyo administration.

Opposition leader Sen. Edgardo Angara, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero and Anakpawis party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano said they would attend the meeting expected to be held later this week at the Manila Hotel.

But some put in a caveat.

"We are prepared to meet and to talk to anyone, but it must be clear that the purpose is not to save President Macapagal-Arroyo or prevent her ouster," Escudero said.

Escudero, secretary general of the United Opposition, acknowledged the urgency of the situation. He cited the people's "growing disenchantment" as a result of government corruption, low wages, the high prices of basic commodities and continued oil price increases.

"We' re not a destructive opposition," Escudero stressed, adding that, like Malacañang, the opposition desired what was best for the people.

"The government should be more responsive to the needs of the people," he said. "The problem is this: They [administration officials] seem to be too busy trying to keep and protect their jobs that they seem to forget to do their jobs, which is principally to serve the majority of the peo-

RIVAL/ A19

DETAINED former President Joseph Estrada greets his mother Doña Mary during her 100th birthday celebration at the Manila Hotel.

REM ZAMORA

Doña Mary's 100th: 'A wonderful feeling'

By Fe Zamora, Nelson Forte Flores and Margaux C. Ortiz

A MUSICAL tribute to their beloved *Lola* Maria Ejercito, said it all.

"Who will buy this wonderful feeling?" the children, all 62 of them, pranced onstage to the tune of a song from the musical "Oliver."

Indeed, what could be a more wonderful feeling than to celebrate your 100th birthday surrounded by family and friends.

Dressed in a rhinestone-studded pink gown, Doña Mary literally sparkled.

A 25-foot wooden replica of the 9-layer cake and an ice carving the spelled out M-A-R-I-A served as the centerpiece of the Filipiniana-themed birthday bash yesterday at the Fiesta Pavilion of the Manila Hotel.

The third among five daughters of Paulino and Patrocino Marcelo, Doña Mary studied at the Colegio de Sta. Rosa in Manila and took up pastry-making and baking in Europe and the United States.

In 1926, she married Emilio Ejercito, a Chicago-educated engineer, and together they raised nine children, including Joseph, who would be elected President in 1998.

A display of photos in sepia of the young Maria as Miss Manila and Carnival Queen in the 1920s gave visitors a preview of a dark-eyed fashionable lady of means.

DOÑA/ A19

RESCUED Abu Sayyaf victim Gracia Burnham says her children, who had begged her to return to their home in the Philippines, now seem much more settled. AP

Gracia, 3 kids put closure to ordeal in secret RP visit

ROSE HILL, Kansas—Disguised in a long blond wig, former US hostage Gracia Burnham and her three children secretly returned to the Philippines where the family once served as missionaries and the woman and her husband were abducted by Moro bandits.

That visit—which lasted three weeks during the recent Christmas school break—gave the family a "good dose of closure," Burnham told The Associated Press in a recent interview at her home near Wichita.

"We didn't tell anyone here in America that we were going, and we didn't tell anyone in the Philippines that we were coming. And I figured, if we could sneak in there as a family, we could be normal—and that is exactly what happened," she said.

It was her second trip to the Philippines since Abu Sayyaf bandits kidnapped 20 people from Palawan's Dos Palmas resort in 2001. Among those abducted then were missionary couple Martin and Gracia Burnham of Wichita, Kansas, and Guillermo Sobero of Corona, California.

Most of the hostages later escaped or were rescued or ransomed. Sobero and two Filipino workers were beheaded in captivity. The Burnham couple's 377-day ordeal ended with a bloody military rescue on June 7, 2002, that left Martin Burnham and Filipino nurse Ediborа Yap dead.

Gracia Burnham returned to Manila in July last year to testify against her Abu Sayyaf abductors, but she still longed to return to the rural provinces—without the bulletproof vests and cars, the bodyguards, the FBI agents and the media.

Her children—Jeff, Mindy and Zach—had begged her to return to their home in the Philippines where the family had lived before the children were whisked away to safety after their parents' kidnapping.

So on their visit last December, the family

GRACIA/ A4

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated brief rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly over the eastern section.

SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legaspi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Petron blinks, raises gas prices

'The (increase) will go to our dealers'

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER holding off on hiking the prices of its fuel and cooking gas for two weeks, industry leader Petron Corp. yesterday gave in and raised its gasoline, diesel and kerosene prices by 50 centavos a liter and of its liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) by 50 centavos a kilogram.

"The (increase) will go to our dealers to reflect the increase in their operating costs," Petron said in a statement.

Two weeks ago, all local oil firms raised their fuel prices by 75 centavos a liter and their LPG prices by 75 centavos a kilogram.

They cited the consistently high prices of oil and LPG in the regional and world markets as their reason for implementing the increase.

Data from the Department of Energy showed that as of the end of April, the benchmark Dubai crude, which refiners like Petron use to price their products, had climbed to $47.20 a barrel, almost $2 more than the March average of $45.84 a barrel.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products likewise soared to $61.51 a barrel as against $59.47 a barrel in March.

MOPS-based diesel also remained high at $68.29 a barrel, a little over $1 more than the March average of $67.24 a barrel.

For LPG, the April contract price hit a high of $417.10 per metric ton (MT), up by almost $38 per MT from the March price of $380.50 per MT.

Despite the high costs, the DOE had asked the oil firms to explain why they raised their prices when regional and world prices had actually started to soften since the first week of April.

"While world oil prices are still high, the upward trend seen early (last) month had eased since April 4. The public wants to know why our domestic prices had increased. Oil companies should explain this," Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla had said.

The joint oil price monitoring task force of the DOE and the Department of Justice has ordered local oil firms to submit their financial statements to determine whether or not their last 75-centavo per liter fuel price hike was justified.

The actual inquiry has yet to start.

Since the beginning of the year, gasoline prices have gone up seven times by a total of P3.85 a liter, while the prices of diesel fuel have increased eight times by a total of P4.05 per liter. LPG prices have risen thrice by a total of P2.15 per kilogram.

Last week, President Macapagal-Arroyo urged consumers to patronize Petron because it did not raise its prices like the other big and small oil players in the country.

Yesterday, she still endorsed Petron, saying the hike in its prices was "only one-third of the increases" promulgated by its competitors.

"They have been holding back. The price increase was only one-third of what the others had done over the past several weeks," the President said at a press conference. *With Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

JAPANESE DEFENSE MINISTER
Japanese Defense Minister Ohno Yoshinori waves to photographers during a visit to Camp Aguinaldo Monday. Beaming beside him is Philippine Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Efren Abu. JOAN BONDOC

European court junks Joma suits vs inclusion on terror list

By Nikko Dizon

A COURT of the European Communities has dismissed the three cases filed by Jose Ma. Sison, challenging his inclusion in the European Union's (EU) list of terrorists almost three years ago.

In a statement, the Department of Foreign Affairs said the Philippine Embassy in Brussels had reported that on April 26, the Court of First Instance of the Court of Justice of the European Communities dismissed the cases filed by Sison.

"In disposing of the three cases, the court ruled that Mr. Sison's claims were unfounded and inadmissible," the DFA said.

The court also ordered Sison to pay all court costs.

Sison, founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CCP) and political consultant of the National Democratic Front (NDF), filed the cases in 2003, demanding that the EU reveal to him the identities of the states that had provided the basis for his inclusion in the EU's terrorists list.

He also demanded the surrender of all documents pertaining to his inclusion in the list.

The court mentioned in its decision the validity of effective measures against terrorists, saying, "... it must be accepted that the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism presupposes that information held by the public authorities on persons or entities suspected of terrorism is kept secret so that the information remains relevant and enables effective action to be taken. Consequently, disclosure to the public of the document requested would necessarily have undermined the public interest in relation to public security."

The DFA said the court's decision did not touch on a separate case filed by Sison demanding his removal from the list.

The New People's Army (NPA), the armed component of the CPP, was also included in the EU terrorists list.

Sison has been living in the Netherlands as a political refugee since the overthrow of strongman Ferdinand Marcos in 1986.

Japan seen to open doors soon to RP nurses

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE SKY will be the limit for Filipino nurses and caregivers looking for jobs in Japan.

This was the assurance given by Japanese Sen. Hirohiko Nakamura to President Macapagal-Arroyo at a meeting in Malacañang yesterday afternoon.

Nakamura was optimistic that the bill he filed in the Diet to open Japan's doors to Filipino nurses and caregivers will be approved by October this year.

With the legislative work completed, Nakamura said the first batch of Filipino nurses and caregivers could start heading for Japan by April next year.

An initial 200 nurses and caregivers would be taken in immediately, Nakamura said, but thereafter there would be no limit as how many health care professionals Japan would accept from the Philippines.

He said the Filipino nurses and caregivers would be given the same salaries and benefits as their Japanese counterparts.

Nakamura heads an 11-member Japanese delegation that is in Manila for four days to observe the training of local nurses and caregivers.

The group is expected to make recommendations to local authorities on how to improve local caregiver training to be at par with Japanese standards.

Nakamura came to the Philippines on the invitation of Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) chair Efraim Genuino.

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Sabio says Palace wanted him to head PCGG in July last year

By Alcuin Papa

NEWLY appointed Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) chair Camilo Sabio confirmed that as far back as July 2004, the Palace wanted to appoint him as Haydee Yorac's replacement.

During his oath-taking yesterday before Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita in Malacañang, Sabio issued a statement saying he would resign if his position on the recovery of the Marcos wealth were to run counter to the President's.

Sabio said that on July 2, 2004, while he was still Presidential Adviser for Constitutional Reforms, a Cabinet member told him of a proposal to President Macapagal-Arroyo to appoint him as PCGG chair.

At the time, Sabio said Yorac had expressed her desire to resign and go back to her law practice. Sabio said yes to the suggestion.

The Cabinet member, whom Sabio declined to name, later informed him that the President would appoint him PCGG chair in the first week of August 2004.

"The President waited for Chairperson Yorac to resign. For reasons of her own, Chairperson Yorac did not resign," Sabio related.

Later, Sabio said he was appointed by the Palace as acting commissioner while "the resignation of Yorac was being awaited."

On Oct. 21, 2004, Sabio was informed that he had been appointed PCGG commissioner on Oct. 12, and took his oath before Yorac herself.

Despite waiting in line, Sabio stressed he had a good working relationship with Yorac.

When the PCGG had to deliberate on the issue of whether the companies under the Coconut Industry Investment Funds (CIIF) should exercise their preemptive rights to the recent San Miguel Corp. stock offering, Yorac called an en banc meeting for that purpose.

"At the meeting, I inquired from Chairperson Yorac whether she had already sought guidance on the matter from the President. She informed me that she had, in fact, already submitted several memoranda for that purpose but had not received any response. So we assumed the President wanted the commission to freely decide on the matter. And we did," Sabio said.

When Yorac resigned last month, Sabio surprised reporters when he said he was not surprised on his appointment as PCGG chair. "I understand I was to replace her (Yorac) when she leaves," he said.

The feisty Yorac resigned as PCGG chair over the objections of some lawmakers. She cited her health—although she had recovered from cancer—and her desire to go back to private law practice.

EXECUTIVE Secretary Eduardo R. Ermita, right, swears into office Camilo L. Sabio as Acting Chairman of the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) during simple ceremonies in Malacañang Monday. JOSEPH MUEGO / CONTRIBUTOR

Gov't laments US move to retain RP on IPR watch list

THE GOVERNMENT has lamented a decision by the US Trade Representative to retain the Philippines on its watch list of countries suspected of violating intellectual property rights.

"The Philippines has clearly shown the political will and commitment to protect IPR as reflected in the achieved targets of the IPR action plan and this should have been the USTR's basis to take us off the watch list," said Adrian S. Cristobal Jr., director general of the Intellectual Property Office (IPO).

In a press statement, Cristobal said the Philippines should have been removed from the watch list because of its successes in protecting intellectual property rights.

He cited the seizure last year of about P900 million worth of fake goods by the Optical Media Board (OMB), the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

Cristobal said the government has set up 65 special commercial courts to handle IPR cases; passed critical legislation such as the Optical Media Act; and institutionalized special IP enforcement units in the NBI, PNP and the Bureau of Customs. He also said the National Telecommunications Commission would soon crack down on cable TV piracy.

"We are not here to protect only the interest of the US and their multinationals, but we shall continue IP protection for our own social and economic benefits," Cristobal said.

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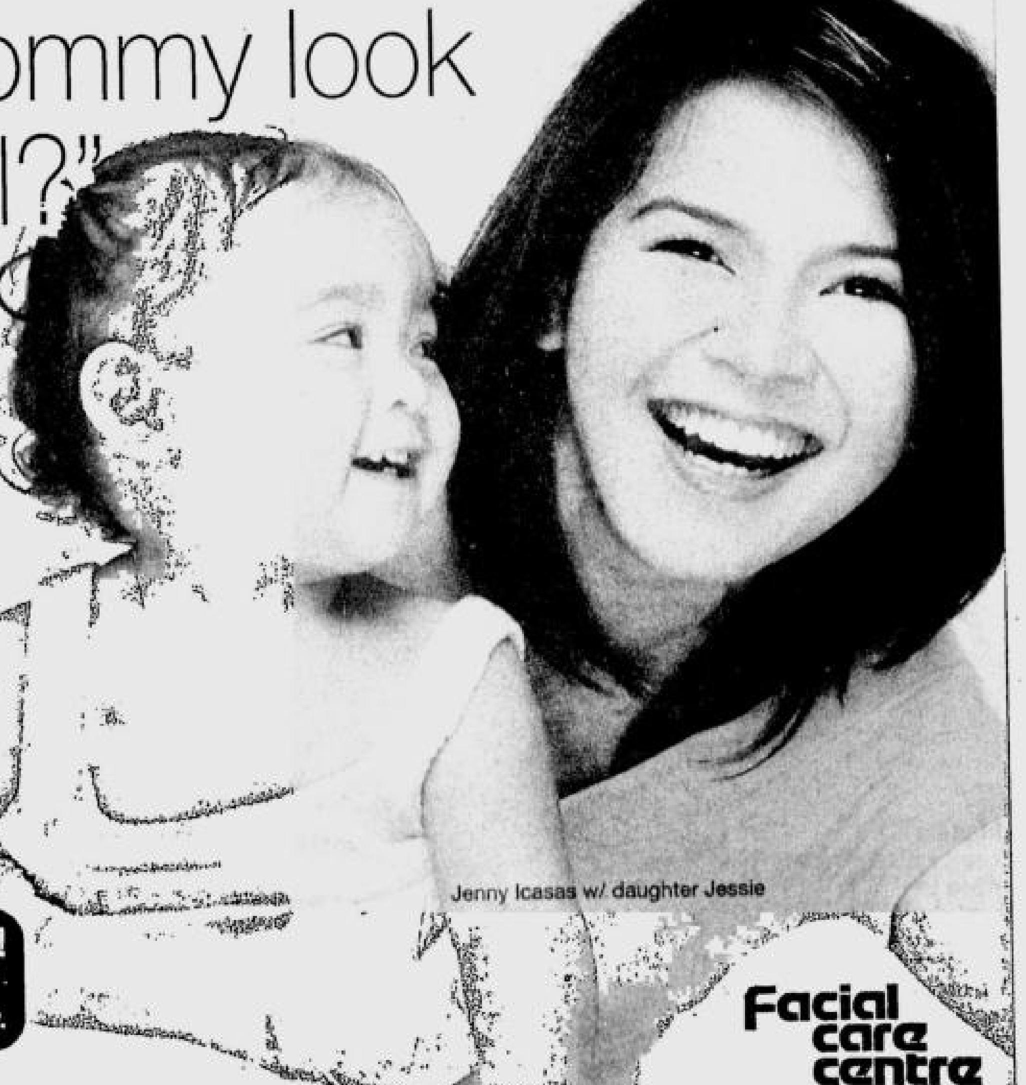

Jenny Icasas w/ daughter Jessie

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DOJ won't charge Abat

From page A1

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez dismissed Abat's defiant call for the establishment of a revolutionary junta to replace President Macapagal-Arroyo as the "ranting of an old man."

"We will not flatter him by filing charges against him," Gonzalez told reporters in a series of telephone interviews. "The government can survive in spite of his ranting."

Besides, he said, he had received "no marching orders from the President on this."

Abat, aged 80 and a former Army chief, announced last weekend he had organized a national salvation movement that would launch a "people power" uprising to force Ms Arroyo out of office.

The Philippine National Police then said it was gathering evidence against Abat to see if sedition charges could be filed against him.

Abat's statements added to fresh rumors of a destabilization plot against Ms Arroyo and prompted the military and the police to declare a red alert during nationwide Labor Day protests on Sunday.

Gonzalez said the ex-general could be "cited for inciting to sedition or inciting to rebellion" but added: "We must look at the context and effect of what he said.

"There is a narrow demarcation line between freedom of assembly and speech and agitating the public," he said, noting that Abat was really agitating the public "by telling them to rise up against the government."

"My personal assessment is that Abat could be behind the destabilization plot against the Arroyo administration," he said.

Old man's 'aberration'

Still, the Palace was inclined to "let it go."

"It's just an aberration of an old man," Gonzalez said.

He said such leniency was similar to the line taken by the government during the funeral of the late actor Fernando Poe Jr. when Poe supporters issued inflammatory statements against the government.

AYAW NAMIN SA MILITARY JUNTA KAMANGGAGAWA
NO TO MILITARY JUNTA!!! -KAMANGGAGAWA-
AYAW NG MANGGAGAWA SA MILITARY JUNTA! KAMANGGAGAWA

MEMBERS of the moderate labor group Ka-Manggagawa disagree with former Gen. Fortunato Abat's military junta plan during a press conference in Quezon City. JOAN BONDOC

"We will not enforce the full force of the law against Abat. We will give him the benefit of the doubt," he said.

Ms Arroyo told reporters it was time for the country to move on.

"It is now time for all our people to leave recriminations behind and push forward together for the economy," she said.

GMA is cool–Ermita

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Ms Arroyo had not let loose talk about destabilization affect her work.

"She spent the last few weeks visiting the provinces. If she was unnerved [by coup rumors], I don't think she would get out of Malacañang."

Referring to the rumors, Ermita said: "President Arroyo is able to calm down those sending her text messages because she believes in the loyalty of the Cabinet, the police and Armed Forces to the greater interest of the nation. She gets a lot of information and prepares very well on what could happen."

'Firmly in the saddle'

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes said the largely peaceful Labor Day rallies showed that "the Arroyo administration is firmly in the saddle."

"The people can now rest and say that all these people who are championing the wild process will be unheeded by the people themselves," Reyes said.

Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao said Gonzalez had spoken and the PNP would follow.

"That is the evaluation of the DOJ. Let us respect the opinion of the justice secretary," he said.

Abat unperturbed

Lomibao said the police did not consider Abat a threat to the administration.

Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. dismissed Abat's statements as "irresponsible" but indicated he would not recommend the filing of charges against Abat.

Abat was unperturbed by the rumpus he had caused.

He said any threat to charge him with sedition would not deter him from pursuing his group's objective, which is to set up a revolutionary government.

"We are planning our moves right now," he added. *With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Luige A. del Puerto, Dona Pazzibugan and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

Retired AFP officers defend Abat 'outburst'

By Fe Zamora

FORMER Defense Secretary Fortunato Abat was ventilating his disgust at the way the country was being run when he called for the establishment of a revolutionary government, one of the leaders of a 1989 failed coup attempt said yesterday.

"It was an outburst from years of disappointment, an expression of disgust [at] the failure of government to deliver services to the people," retired Brig. Gen. Jose Comendador told the INQUIRER.

Comendador said Abat had the reputation of being a fine officer who planned his moves.

"It really takes something to push him to do something as serious as that," Comendador, who is now president and CEO of Sagip Pinoy Foundation, added.

Retired Col. Reynaldo Cabauatan, who was also linked to coup attempts against then President Corazon Aquino, also defended Abat.

"General Abat wanted to get public approval of his plans, and he got it to a certain degree as shown by the presence of various groups in the meeting," Cabauatan said.

About 20 organizations attended last Saturday's meeting at Club Filipino where Abat launched his call for the removal of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Cabauatan clarified reports that Abat had walked out of the meeting after rejecting calls that he lead a protest march on Labor Day.

Abat left because the "meeting was over," he said.

Comendador and Cabauatan were among the retired military officers who were at Club Filipino.

Gracia . . .

From page A1

visited the province where they had once lived. They visited old friends, neighbors and co-workers and ate in their old house.

So happy

"They were just so happy to be in the old house," Gracia said of her children. "They were so happy to be with their friends, and they climbed mountains and spent the nights sleeping outside—you know it's the tropics. They would sleep out on the trampoline with their friends. I didn't see sadness in them at all. I saw a lot of joy."

When it was time to return to Kansas, the children were ready, she said.

Since their return, Burnham said, her children "seem much more settled."

"They used to say things like, 'Mom, do you remember when we were really making a difference in the world.' We could see every day how we were making a difference because there is poverty all around you—and here in America, nobody needs anything," she said.

Since her rescue, Burnham, 46, has devoted herself to raising her children. She believes that was the reason her life was spared. She also speaks to groups about her experiences as a hostage and has written two books, including one which was released in April this year.

In her second book, "To Fly Again," Burnham wrote about how her religious faith helped her forgive and adjust to life back in the United States without her husband.

"In my life, forgiving others has just been very healing for me," she said. "It has allowed me to go on without carrying the baggage that bitterness brings and the baggage of always being angry and upset about what has happened to you."

Her first book, "In the Presence of My Enemies," which described the couple's experiences in the jungle as hostages, became a best seller.

She keeps in contact with the FBI, recently calling the agency to discuss something she remembered—her captors talking about taking their war to Manila. She warned the FBI to watch certain places in the city, particularly the presidential palace.

Moving on

For now, the family is trying to move on from the kidnapping ordeal.

Jeffrey, 18, is graduating from high school next month and he plans to study aviation at a Virginia university. Mindy, 15, is active in a community theater group that is putting on a presentation of "Fiddler on the Roof." Zach, 14, is moving from middle school to high school this year.

Since the kidnappings, the family members now discuss more freely their feelings, Gracia Burnham said. When Jeff leaves each morning for school, she said, he still usually tells her: "If I never see you again, I want you to know I love you."

Burnham laughed when asked whether there was another man in her life yet.

"I don't think any guy would be interested in this mess—three teenagers and me speaking about my first husband. Like some guy is going to want to get involved with that," she said.

She had believed the best part of her life was over when Martin died—until she met the Rev. Edward Hartman in Mississippi.

Hartman, who had remarried after losing his wife when their four children were small, encouraged Burnham to believe the best is yet to come—so much so that Burnham said she rewrote the ending of her book that she had already sent to the publisher.

"I truly believe the best is yet to come, and I have no idea what that could possibly be," she said.

"The God who took me through the jungle in the Philippines is going to take me through the jungle in America, because I think life here can feel like a jungle." AP

Gun ban crusader still a man on fire

From page A1

other relatives in the march from Mariveles to Balanga in Bataan. On the second day, he witnessed something on the road that would change him forever.

"The image is still very clear in my mind," Pacheco told the INQUIRER.

"There was a child suckling on the breast of his dead mother," he said. "I didn't see anyone take the child. Everybody continued to march in the blistering heat of the sun."

This not only convinced Pacheco of the senselessness of war, it helped mold his opinion about guns later in life. For him, gun ownership is an extension of war.

So for the last two decades, Pacheco has been pressing for a gunless society in a country obsessed with guns. For that, he has been called naïve, even insane. In the world he wants to create, no one can carry a gun outside his home unless he is a policeman or soldier on duty.

A "modern-day Don Quixote" was how Clifford Sorita, secretary general of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), described Pacheco.

"Some would say that what he is doing is an exercise in futility, but I say great men have been called the same thing in the past," Sorita said.

Milagros Magsaysay-Valenzuela, daughter of the late President Ramon Magsaysay, sees in her cousin the same energy she saw in her father.

"When he was a young lawyer, he was intelligent and always made people laugh," Valenzuela said. "I guess when you grow older, you see more, you become wiser and more passionate."

She could have been describing a young man who chose to go underground during martial law. If activism is the luxury of youth, Pacheco, it would seem, has remained young.

Man on fire

At 72, Pacheco is still a man on fire. When he talks of gun control, his face lights up. He is transformed, animated. He speaks rapidly, fist pounding the table every time he makes a point. He has the habit of throwing out a new sentence before finishing his last and, midway, shifting ideas, defending his opinions, fortifying a thesis.

On the day of this interview, he was holding a copy of the September 1989 issue of The Economist, which contained a poster of the late action king Fernando Poe Jr.—eyebrows meeting, eyes penetrating, his right hand holding a .357 Magnum.

"We have to change our macho culture. Movies have to stop glorifying guns," Pacheco said.

"Why do conflicts have to be resolved using guns anyway?" he muttered.

Since the late 1980s, Pacheco has been trying to convince the government to ban guns in public places. He almost succeeded in 1991, only to be defeated just when everyone thought he had it in the bag.

Speaking his mind

Now in the twilight of his life, Pacheco would talk to anyone who cared to listen, insisting that as a Christian, it was his duty to do so. He blew his top when he read about a five-day arms show at SM Megamall last year.

He spoke his mind again when Henry Lanot, a former Pasig City congressman, was gunned down at noon barely two weeks ago and when the son-in-law of a former Mandaluyong City councilor was ambushed last week.

"(The police) must tell the President to enforce a total gun ban, with no exemptions. The President can do this even without legislation," he said.

"The President must urge Congress to increase the penalty for the illegal possession of a firearm to life imprisonment. Why? It should be like that," he said. "A gun ban is a preventive measure. Let us not wait until someone shoots somebody again."

Catholic optimist

Religion is central to Pacheco's life. He often quotes the Bible. He has a copy of the book "Vicar of Christ," along with several other Catholic readings.

"When you lose hope, you cease to be a Christian," he said.

His Catholicism keeps him an optimist. His faith anchors him to the belief of a better tomorrow.

"Can you tell me of a problem that God created? None, all our problems are man-made," he said.

As a boy, Pacheco was a *segundo sakristan mayor* or second-in-command among acolytes. He later took part in the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP-2), one of the conventions conducted in preparation for Vatican II, the council that opened the Church to reforms.

No follow-through

He was responsible for this phrase in the PCP-2 book: "All sectors of the Church must actively work for an end to the production and manufacture of the technology of death and the arms trade as part of its vision of peace."

Holding a copy of the book, with the phrase highlighted, Pacheco said it constantly reminded him of the Church's failure to follow through.

Was he disappointed that the Church he so loved seemed to have let him down?

"No," he said, yet his voice quivered. Here was a man who could not conceal his disappointment in the institution he had embraced fully and loved thoroughly.

"I'm not disappointed. I just feel sad," he said. Hurt was etched on his face. It was one of those rare moments that Pacheco spoke slowly.

Path of nonviolence

Pacheco was born in Balanga, Bataan, in 1932. He lived a comfortable middle-class life until war broke out. American bombs and Japanese rifles reduced his family and the rest of the nation to refugees.

When he was a high school student at the University of Sto. Tomas, another incident led him to the path of nonviolence.

Pacheco was tasked with prosecuting erring students. A taller boy he had slighted challenged him to a fistfight. He agreed, so they slugged it out one afternoon after class.

It was getting dark, but the match had yet to be resolved. What was certain, though, was that both boys were tired and hoping that somebody would tell them to knock it off. They decided to postpone the bare-knuckle fight "until the next day."

They skipped class the next day, and did not speak about the fight on the third day. They became good friends after that.

Pacheco's point is that had they been armed, they never would have seen a second day or even a third.

Gun ban killed

Pacheco went on to become a banker, lawyer, government employee, UN officer, PR practitioner and Asian Development Bank press officer.

In 1991, Pacheco's group, the National Action for Total Uplift and Restoration of the Environment (Nature) pushed for a public gun ban. It had the support of students and prominent politicians. Nature collected a million signatures and solicited the help of radio stations, TV networks and newspapers, some of which displayed the antigun logo on their pages.

"Everybody thought we were going to get [a total gun ban]," he said.

But victory did not come. The progun lobby was too strong even for a resolute, determined man like Pacheco and well-meaning politicians.

PACHECO during the launch of the Kapatiran Party in January: Gun ownership is an extension of war. PDI PHOTO

Although certified as urgent by then President Corazon Aquino, her brother, then Rep. Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, sat on the bill and killed it in Congress, according to Pacheco.

It was a big blow to Pacheco. But the defeat taught him one thing: if he wanted something done, he could not rely on politicians, no matter how well-meaning.

The impossible dream

Pacheco formed a political party, the Alliance for the Common Good (Ang Kapatiran) which the Commission on Elections accredited on May 8, 2004.

"If politicians are the problem, let us replace them with new ones, with people who are committed to specific causes," he said.

Pacheco himself tried to run for the Senate last year. He failed to get the Comelec's nod, yet Eddie Gil did.

An uncompromising man, according to the American essayist Gary Wills, cannot be an effective politician.

A politician represents an amalgam of interests, groups and races. If he is uncompromising and unaccommodating, then he alienates large sectors of the society, save perhaps his tiny unit of believers, placing his chances at winning an election at risk.

Pacheco, in this sense, cannot be a politician. He is a dreamer, and a leader of dreamers.

He realizes the futility of dreaming about a gunless society yet continues to convince people that it's not an impossible dream.

"Losing hope is ceasing to be Christian," he said.

6 more firms join DENR's 'horror roll' of polluters

By Blanche S. Rivera

"THE HOUSE that fried chicken built" has turned out to be one of the erring firms found to be poisoning the metropolis' waterways.

Max's Fried Chicken at South Triangle, Quezon City, and Max's Bakeshop in Taguig City were among the restaurants picked by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and a coalition of environmental organizations to be among its second batch of Lason (poison) awardees.

Joining the annual "horror roll" of water polluters are Cabalen Management Co. Inc. in Quezon City, Emerald Mansion in Pasig City, Sunrise Paper Product Industries Inc. in Bataan and Southern Negros Development Corp. in Negros Occidental.

The polluters from Metro Manila were accused of discharging pollutants into the Pasig River while the Negros Occidental firm was said to be draining pollutants into the Ilog River.

Max's and Cabalen joined Barrio Fiesta of Mandaluyong City on the list of polluting restaurants. Barrio Fiesta was cited in the first list of eight polluters released two weeks ago in this year's national Lason Awards.

Former Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun, chair of the environmentalist Earth Day Network, said this year's Lason Awards focused on food, beverage and milling companies.

"We prioritized industries that discharge organic loads that contribute to organic pollution, but we're also looking closely at those who discharge 'hazardous wastes," Gozun said at a press conference yesterday.

Environmental Management Bureau director Julian Amador said the DENR was also preparing to include mining firms in the next Lason Awards.

He said the EMB was developing a database for mining companies that have been operating in the country to check their historical data on mine tailings disposal.

The Mogpog River in Marinduque was the casualty of an accidental disposal of mine wastes caused by a crack in the dam holding tailings from the Marcopper and Placer Dome mining operations.

Aside from mining firms, the Lason Awards is inclined to look at other industries like manufacturing.

Gozun said that while the committee picking the Lason awardees had received many threats of being taken to court, no cases have been filed as yet.

"Anyway, we're ready because we have a firm legal basis for doing this. They might say it is a violation of their constitutional right, but it's also a violation of every citizen's right to know and enjoy a healthy environment," Gozun said.

The Lason awardees are chosen by a committee composed of representatives from Earth Day Network Phils., the Communication Foundation for Asia, Sagip Pasig, Greenpeace, Integrated Bar of the Philippines, and DENR-attached agencies like the Laguna Lake Development Authority, Environmental Management Bureau, Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

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DOF's VAT proposal raises senators' hackles

By TJ Burgonio

FINANCE Secretary Cesar Purisima has proposed that President Macapagal-Arroyo be allowed to raise the value-added tax rate to 12 percent if the consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD) is more than one percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

But even before it could be tackled at today's caucus of the nine-man Senate panel to the bicameral conference committee, the proposal raised howls of protest among administration and opposition legislators.

At today's meeting, the senators hope to hack out a compromise and end the week-long deadlock over whether to retain the VAT rate at 10 percent or hike it to 12 percent.

Sen. Joker Arroyo charged that Malacañang has continued to "trifle with the bicameral conference" by coming up with a proposal that guarantees the increase in the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent "on the say-so of the finance secretary."

"This self-serving and subjective standard makes a mockery of the constitutional test of sufficiency. Since the President does not take seriously the efforts of Congress, then we might as well drop the idea altogether," Arroyo said in an interview.

Purisima forwarded a draft of his proposal to the senators after he was asked to draw up scenarios by which Congress could constitutionally delegate a "standby authority" for the President to hike the VAT rate to 12 percent.

He suggested the President be granted the authority when the ratio of the CPSD to the GDP was "one percent or more," Arroyo said.

Sen. Sergio Osmeña III, for his part, said he would oppose the proposal because it gives the President outright power to raise the VAT with few preconditions.

"That can't be done. They're making us look stupid. This is all *moro-moro* (mock battles)," he said in an interview, pointing out that at present levels, the CPSD was more than 4 percent of the GDP.

Sen. Manuel Villar agreed with Osmeña, saying, "That's like giving automatic power to the President [to raise the VAT rate] because the public sector deficit will always be more than one percent of the GDP."

Villar, however, said he would keep an "open mind" about the proposal until today's caucus.

For 2004, the CPSD stood at P233.46 billion, or 4.8 percent of the P4.84 trillion GDP, according to reports.

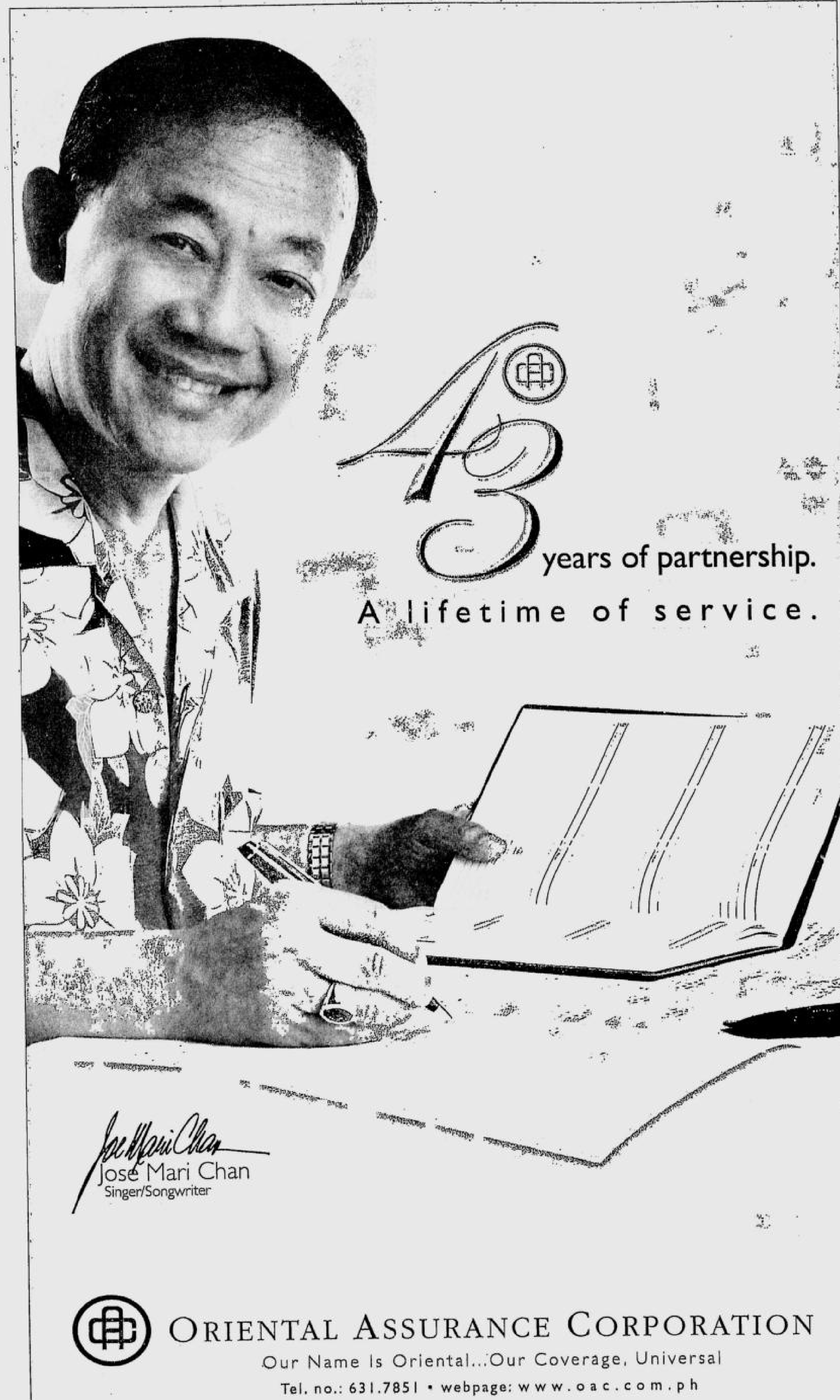
The CPSD covers the financial position of the national government, government-owned and -controlled corporations, government financial institutions and local government units.

The GDP, on the other hand, refers to the total value of finished goods and services produced for the marketplace within the country's borders in a given year.

Arroyo, Osmeña and Villar are members of the Senate bicam panel headed by Sen. Ralph Recto. The other members are Senators Rodolfo Biazon, Edgardo Angara, Juan Ponce Enrile, Richard Gordon and Jamby Madrigal.

Recto had broached the idea of granting the President standby authority to raise the VAT under certain conditions in a bid to break the stalemate in the bicam committee.

The senators suspended talks on Tuesday last week after they decided to stick to their position to keep the VAT rate at 10 percent, which pitted them against their counterparts in the House who are batting for a VAT rate of 12 percent.



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Air Force turns over ashes of crash victims to Red Cross

By Nikko Dizon

THE PHILIPPINE Air Force turned over to the Red Cross on Sunday the ashes and bits of bone retrieved from the passenger cabin of the Huey helicopter that crashed in Nueva Ecija last week, killing nine people, including the country's top geoscientist Dr. Raymundo Punongbayan.

The PAF also officially terminated its site retrieval operations the same day, Lt. Col. Restituto Padilla, Air Force spokesperson, told the INQUIRER in a phone interview yesterday.

The helicopter's engine and parts of its rotor and tail are now at the PAF 410th Maintenance Wing at Clark Field, Pampanga, for analysis, Padilla said.

The ashes were believed to be those of the three victims, whose remains rescuers were unable to find in search operations last week.

Of the six sets of mostly burned remains retrieved last Thursday, four had been identified as those of the helicopter's crewmen—pilot 1Lt. Reynaldo Gerodias, co-pilot 1Lt. Jason Salazar and crew members Staff Sgt. Edgar Ramolete and Sgt. Whilbert Tacata.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) is still determining the identities of the two other sets of remains.

Aside from Punongbayan, four top scientists of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) were on the Huey.

They were Phivolcs chief geologist Norman Tungol, associate scientist Jessie Daligdig and science researchers Dindo Javier and Orlando Abengoza.

Led by Punongbayan, former Phivolcs chief and Philippine National Red Cross governor at the time of the accident, the group was looking for relocation sites for the victims of the flash floods that hit Aurora and Quezon in December last year, as well as to map out earthquake and flash flood-danger areas in order to minimize future damage and loss of lives.

Padilla said the Air Force would furnish a report of its investigation to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"I believe she has expressed an interest in the investigation," he said.

Padilla said a preliminary investigation board had been convened by Brig. Gen. Horacio Tolentino of the 205th Tactical Helicopter Wing in Mactan, Cebu, the unit to which the ill-fated helicopter had belonged.

The board's findings would be submitted to a "bigger body" composed of the Air Force Safety Office headed by Col. Eusaquito Manalo, he said.

Padilla said it would be hard to predict when the investigation would be completed.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, May 3, 2005
Philip & James, Apostles
1st Reading: 1 Cor 15:1-8
Gospel: John 14:6-14

Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me. If you know me, you will know the Father also; indeed you know him and you have seen him."

Philip asked him, "Lord, show us the Father and that is enough." Jesus said to him, "What! I have been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever sees me sees the Father; how can you say: 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

"All that I say to you, I do not say of myself. The Father who dwells in me is doing his own work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; at least believe it on the evidence of these works that I do.

"Truly, I say to you, the one who believes in me will do the same works that I do; and he will even do greater than these, for I am going to the Father. Everything you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. And everything you ask in calling upon my Name, I will do."

Commentary

JAMES is the first of the Apostles to be martyred early in the Church's initial fervor and persecutions while Philip who asks Jesus to show him the Father, goes on in the midst of persecution to preach to Gentiles and Jews, eventually being killed for bearing his share of the burden of the Gospel. They knew the intimate company of Jesus, ran from standing with him in the Garden, yet the gift of the Spirit made them courageous and out-spoken in their preaching. Jesus proclaimed that if we believe in him, we will do the same works that he did- and both Philip and James proved him true to his word. We too are called to believe, to obey and to know the Father in Jesus' word and works. And we too, must prove Jesus true to his Word, by doing the works that Jesus has begun in the world. We are to bear our share of the burden of the Gospel and to preach Jesus' word and do His works in our day.

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Scholarship fund set up to honor Punongbayan

Geneva, Switzerland—A foundation based in Lausanne has announced the creation of a P4-million scholarship program for seismology and volcanology students in honor of the late Dr. Ray Punongbayan.

Dr. Amador Muriel, director of the Center for Fluid Dynamics, said the World Laboratory and World Federation of Scientists will match private donations to the fund up to P4 million.

The Center for Fluid Dynamics had previously managed a P5-million scholarship program from multinational corporations in the Philippines. The program, started in 1991, ran for five years and produced 40 science and engineering graduates. Several scholars have moved on to graduate schools abroad.

"It's time for the Center to return to Manila with a major activity, like raising a scholarship fund to help replace the talent represented by Dr. Ray Punongbayan and his scientific group," Muriel said.

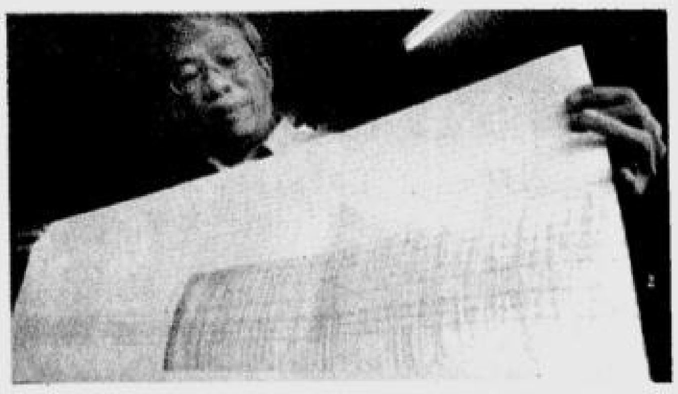
Muriel said he, Punongbayan, physicist Alfonso Albano and biophysicist Eduardo Padlan "grew up together in the Diliman campus of UP."

The program will be launched in December. Donors and friends of the Ray Punongbayan Scholarship Project may contact Amador.Muriel@cern.ch .

HAZARD MAP

Crash delays disaster plan for Aurora, Quezon areas

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk



PUNONGBAYAN: He drew lahar hazard map by hand six months after the 1991 eruptions.

· PDI FILE PHOTO

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—While the death last week of five scientists in a helicopter crash was a big loss to the country, the tragedy has set back disaster preparedness efforts in landslide-hit Aurora and Quezon provinces a month before the onslaught of the rainy season.

The five scientists—former Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology Director Dr. Raymundo Punongbayan, Phivolcs chief geologist Norman Tungol, associate scientist Jessie Daligdig and science researchers Dindo Javier and Orlando Abengoza—were preparing the map for flash flood and earthquake hazards in the two eastern Luzon provinces.

Basis for map

Phivolcs Director Renato Solidum Jr. said the aerial survey's results would have allowed the team to confirm the findings of field work conducted a week before the Philippine Air Force Huey UH-IH 324 helicopter crashed on Mt. Namal in Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija.

Solidum said the new data would have been the basis for finalizing the hazard map. Tungol was the team leader of the project suggested by Punongbayan, who had retired from Phivolcs and was a Philippine National Red Cross governor at the time of his death.

"The (Mines and Geosciences Bureau) had done a hazard map after the (November-December 2004) landslides. Ray (Punongbayan), as PNRC director, wanted Phivolcs to complement and expand the map by including flash flood and earthquake risks," Solidum said.

Disaster plan

As early as Dec. 9, 2004, Punongbayan, Tungol and Daligdig had prepared an 18-page briefer on flash flood occurrences and disaster management issues for the Regional Development Council in Central Luzon.

The briefer became a reference for RDC officials meeting in Malolos, Bulacan, that day as they drafted a rehabilitation program to help the region cope with the consequences of the landslides and floods that occurred after four typhoons hit the country last year.

Punongbayan and Tungol failed to make it to the RDC meeting, having grabbed the chance to fly over Aurora and Quezon that day.

Flash floods

Nevertheless, the RDC adopted their recommendation to produce hazard maps for the flash floods that Punongbayan believed was the cause of the disaster, not logging, illegal or otherwise.

"Because flash floods are ill-understood and unappreciated, there is no effort on the part of the government here and elsewhere in the world to pursue the production of flash flood hazard maps," the three scientists had said.

They defined a flash flood as the "sudden onrush down a river valley of an unusually large volume of water, usually carrying a lot of sediment and debris, mostly trees and plants, which are deposited at the valley mouth."

The signs to watch out for are: Heavy rains lasting more than 12 hours, the drying up of rivers during heavy rains and even when it is not raining, and high levels of water in rain gauges.

Pinatubo experience

The importance that Punongbayan had attached to hazard maps went as far back as the Mount Pinatubo disaster, according to Remigio Mercado, Central Luzon director of the National Economic and Development Authority and RDC co-chair.

"Ray's lahar hazard map was the heart of the Mt. Pinatubo rehabilitation and reconstruction plan," Mercado told the INQUIRER.

He said Punongbayan drew the initial version of the lahar hazard map by hand six months after the 1991 eruptions.

"He used topographical maps as bases. Through that, he identified the gullies and rivers that would be potential pathways of the lahar (volcanic mudflow)," Mercado said.

Mercado said Neda obtained funds from the Australian government to reproduce the map. Because the map visualized the extent of the threat, he said this became the basis through which Task Force Pinatubo and later its predecessor, the Mount Pinatubo Commission, justified the interventions that Congress needed to fund.

Engineering plans

"It became the basis of determining which communities faced real dangers. It showed where engineering interventions against lahar should be focused, where to put up evacuation centers and resettlements, where to pursue livelihood projects. Ray thought development could not be done randomly in a situation where the effects of lahar were widespread and rising," Mercado said.

The map, he said, also saved the people taxes. A P2.5-billion resettlement project on a Bureau of Animal Industry property in San Marcelino, Zambales, was aborted when the map showed the area was high risk. The assessment proved correct.

As for the lahar hazard map that was updated last year, the former Phivolcs chief did "not ask for an honorarium or claim credit for it," Mercado said. He was content with being served tamales, a native rice cake topped with peanut sauce and wrapped in banana leaves.

"He found joy that the Mt. Pinatubo plan was completed by us locals rather than by foreigners. He took pride and really rubbed it in *na mas magaling ang* Pinoy (The Filipino was better)," Mercado said.

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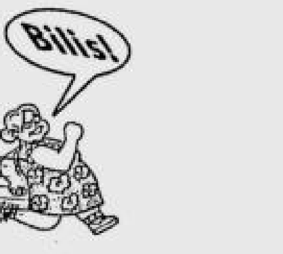

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Car bomb attack kills 25 Iraq mourners

BAGHDAD—A car bomb exploded in an upscale shopping district of Baghdad on Monday, killing at least six Iraqis and setting fire to an apartment building, police said.

Two other bombs exploded in the capital, narrowly missing a top Iraqi security official and a US patrol. In southern Iraq, a British soldier was killed in fighting, the British government said.

On Sunday, insurgents had killed at least 36 Iraqis in a series of attacks, including 25 who died and more than 50 who were wounded by a car bomb that ripped through a tent packed with mourners at the funeral of a Kurdish official in the northern city of Tal Afar.

That was the single deadliest attack since insurgents started bearing down on Iraq's newly named government late last week.

Since Thursday, when Iraq's interim government finally appointed a partial Cabinet after three months of political infighting, at least 123 people, including 11 Americans, have been killed in a slew of bombings, ambushes and other attacks.

Laith Kuba, an adviser to incoming Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, said on Monday that parliament will swear in the new government Tuesday after he appoints officials to the government's two unfilled deputy prime minister positions and the five Cabinet posts now served by acting ministers.

The British Foreign Office also announced three arrests in the abduction of a British aid worker believed slain last year, saying they were made Sunday morning during a coalition raid in an insurgent area 30 km south of Baghdad.

In Monday's attack on the shopping district in southern Baghdad, the car bomb set fire to a six-story apartment building with a shop on the ground floor and destroyed at least three cars parked nearby, said police Lt. Ali Hussein. As firefighters fought the blaze, flames and black smoke rose from the ground floor.

Six civilians were killed and seven wounded by the explosion, which had targeted a police patrol in the area, said police Lt. Col. Salman Abdul Karim Al-Fartosi. No police were hurt, he said.

In another attack in Baghdad on Monday, Maj. Gen. Rashid Feleih, the commander of a special interior ministry security force, narrowly escaped unhurt when a roadside bomb hit his four-car convoy, damaging one vehicle, said police Maj. Mousa Abdul Karim.

Elsewhere, a roadside bomb exploded near a US military patrol in northern Baghdad, but no Americans were hurt, said US Army Master Sgt. Greg Kaufman.

In Tal Afar, 150 km east of the Syrian border, a car bomb exploded Sunday at a tent where mourners had gathered for the funeral of Sayed Talib Sayed Wahab, an official of the Kurdish Democratic Party, said deputy provincial governor Khisru Goran.

Goran, who also serves as a KDP spokesperson in the nearby city of Mosul, said the car plowed into the funeral tent and exploded, but the US military said it was not a suicide attack. About 25 people were killed and more than 50 wounded, the US military said.

Six other car bombs exploded in Baghdad on Sunday and at least five American soldiers were injured in the blasts, said Sgt. Andrew Miller, a US military spokesperson.

US and Iraqi officials had hoped to dent support for the militants by including members of the Sunni Arab minority in the new Shiite-dominated Cabinet. Sunnis, who held monopoly power during the rule of Saddam Hussein, are believed to be the backbone of Iraq's insurgency. However, the partial lineup named by al-Jaafari excluded Sunnis from meaningful positions. *AP*

IRAQI firefighters try to douse fire from a building that was hit by a car bomb explosion in the busy Karrada Street in the heart of Baghdad May 2. Four Iraqi civilians were killed and two were wounded in the explosion. AFP

Italy to challenge US exoneration of troops in shooting

ROME—A report by the US military clearing troops who killed a top Italian intelligence officer in Baghdad is to be challenged Monday when Italy produces its own account of the affair. The two countries conducted a joint investigation but failed to agree on its findings.

The US version, published Saturday, exonerated US forces over the killing of Nicola Calipari, 51, who was shot dead as he shepherded a freed Italian hostage to Baghdad airport on March 4.

The incident, which occurred shortly after Calipari had helped free journalist Guiliana Sgrena, has caused a deep rift between Washington and Rome, one of the chief allies of the United States in the Iraq war and occupation.

It has put huge pressure on conservative Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, whose government has recently been plunged into a series of political crises over other issues, notably the economy.

Nicola Calipari was Rome's top intelligence agent in Iraq. He had helped secure the release of Sgrena and was escorting her to Baghdad's airport when US soldiers opened fire on their vehicle at a checkpoint. He was shot dead, while Sgrena and a second Italian agent in the vehicle were injured.

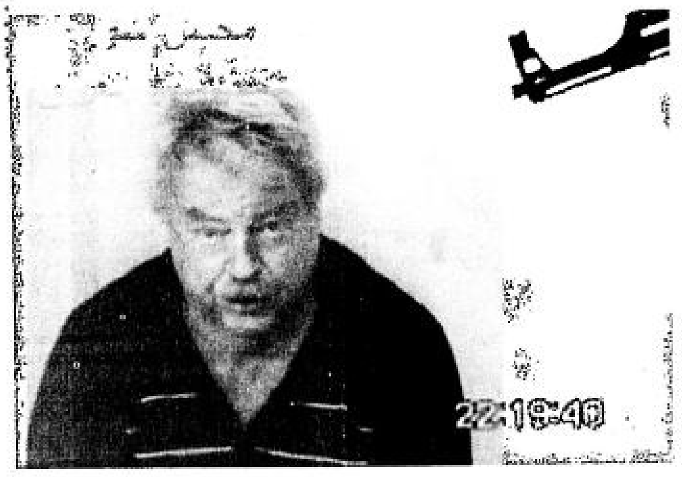
The 42-page US report—much of it censored—recommended that no disciplinary action be taken against the soldiers and said that the Italians had not informed the US forces in Iraq that the car carrying Calipari and Sgrena was travelling to Baghdad airport.

"Prior coordination might have prevented this tragedy," the report said.

It said US soldiers shone a spotlight at the approaching car, pointed a green laser light at its windscreen, shouted and fired warning shots before shooting at the vehicle.

The report, released to the press in Baghdad late Saturday, said the troops followed the rules of engagement and recommended that "no disciplinary action be taken against any soldier involved in the incident." *AFP*

Video shows kidnapped Aussie pleading for life



A VIDEO grab from a tape delivered by militants shows 63-year-old Australian hostage Douglas Wood pleading for his life and asking the Australian and US authorities and the California governor to pull out troops from Iraq. REUTERS

SYDNEY—Australia will send an emergency team to Iraq to seek the release of a kidnapped Australian contractor but will not bow to the militants' demand to withdraw its troops, Prime Minister John Howard said Monday.

Howard, whose country has about 550 troops in the country and is deploying 350 more, said foreign policy could not be "dictated by terrorists" and described the abduction as "an evil act."

The kidnapping of Douglas Wood, 63, was revealed late Sunday when his captors released a videotape showing him pleading for his life and calling on Australia, the United States and Britain to withdraw their soldiers from Iraq.

Wood, an engineer, has lived in the United States since 1992 and is married to an American. He was working on construction projects in Iraq when he was seized.

"Please help me. I don't want to die," says Wood, seated on the floor and sandwiched between two masked men armed with assault rifles.

"My captives are fiercely patriotic—they believe in a strong united Iraq looking after its own destiny," he says, adding that he comes from Alamo in California.

The videotape bears the words Shura Council of the Mujahedeen of Iraq. The group has previously claimed responsibility for attacks on US soldiers and Iraqi forces, as well as the kidnapping of a Turk who was freed in September.

The militants released a statement with the tape, saying it was timed to coincide with Australian Defense Minister Robert Hill's weekend visit to Iraq.

"We'll continue to do all we can consistent with our position on not giving in to hostage-takers and we can't alter that position and we won't alter that position," said Howard, one of US President George W. Bush's staunchest allies.

"We can't have the foreign policy of this country dictated by terrorists," he said, adding that he had been dreading such a situation.

Wood's wife Pearl said she had seen the video and the man was definitely her husband, who had been in Iraq for more than a year.

Other members of the family, in a statement issued in Canberra by one of his brothers Malcolm, expressed great concern at his plight.

"As brothers of Douglas Wood we are distressed and extremely concerned about his situation," it said.

"We trust that our government and its officials, liaising with other governments and agencies as appropriate, will do all that is reasonably in their power to confirm his situation and develop a response." *AFP*

Albatross race to Africa draws celebrities, bettors

CANBERRA—With electronic jockeys on board and carrying the hopes of celebrity owners and punters from around the world, 17 unlikely athletes have taken off in an endurance race deemed by some as the toughest in the world.

The athletes are Shy Albatross birds, and their annual migration up to 9,600 km to Africa from their homes on three tiny islands off the Australian island state of Tasmania has become the Big Bird Race.

Punters around the globe can bet on the race which is in its second year and track the progress of the birds carrying "electronic jockeys"—satellite transmitters—on the website of British bookmaker Ladbrokes, www.ladbrokes.com.

The competitors also have celebrity "owners" including Heather Mills McCartney, wife of Beatle Paul McCartney, yachtsperson Ellen MacArthur, British television host Michael Parkinson and Australian singer Olivia Newton-John.

The Big Bird Race, run by the Tasmanian state government, the Conservation Foundation and Ladbrokes, seeks to help save the mighty sea bird from extinction, with the money raised from the race going to seabird conservation projects.

"Hundreds of thousands of sea birds are dying unnecessarily in the Southern Ocean due to poorly managed longline fishing techniques... drowning the birds by dragging them for miles underwater," Ladbrokes said on its website.

Longline fishing involved boats dragging baited hooks on lines up to 130 km long. Tasmania's environment department said 100,000 albatrosses were killed every year by the practice and 19 species of the bird were now threatened with extinction.

Four days after the official start of the race, less than half the field appear to have started their epic three-month journey.

Pre-race favorite Fleetwood, owned by British radio DJ Johnnie Walker, has taken the lead, followed by Eighteen Stone of Idiot, owned by British comedian Johnny Vegas.

The race will end when the winning bird crosses the line of longitude at 31 degrees east, Durban, South Africa, or on the 4th of August, whichever comes first, in which case the winning bird will be the one which has travelled the furthest distance west. *Reuters*

AN ELECTRONICALLY tagged albatross, one of 17 to take part in a race starting May 2. AFP

Oman court convicts 31 for coup plot

MUSCAT, Oman—A state security court convicted 31 people Monday of plotting to overthrow the government and sentenced them to prison terms ranging from one to 20 years in prison.

Six defendants were sentenced to 20 years, 12 received 10-year terms, 12 others were sentenced to seven years and one was ordered to spend a year in prison.

The 31 to stand trial were among as many as 100 suspected extremists arrested across Oman earlier this year, following unconfirmed reports some had planned to attack events at a popular shopping and cultural festival. Officials have said many of those arrested were released.

Prosecutors have been demanding the death penalty since the trial began on April 18. During the hearings, authorities reportedly have shown video tapes and photos of weapons caches believed to belong the group.

Information about the arrests and trials of the defendants has been tightly controlled, with the detentions slow to be acknowledged and only a select few senior Omani journalists permitted inside the courtroom.

The charges against those who were tried included attempting armed overthrow of the regime to establish religious rule, belonging to a secret group, recruiting new members and raising funds. *AP*

Blair set to win but may become a lame duck

BLAIR in campaign rally REUTERS

LONDON—As Britain's general election campaign enters its final days, opinion polls suggest Prime Minister Tony Blair is on course for a third term in power.

But a second goal that will be almost as important for the premier—a workable parliamentary majority of 70 or 80 seats—looks far less certain.

Blair has already declared he will not seek a fourth mandate but wants to serve a full third term.

With a small majority in parliament, a rump of disaffected left-wing members of his Labour party could sink any number of policy plans, turning him into a lame duck leader and maybe hastening his departure.

Since waging war in Iraq, Blair has faced a growing band of rebels within his own camp, most of whom should be reelected on Thursday.

A hard core of between 30 and 40 Labour Members of Parliament (MPs) have consistently voted against him on subjects ranging from higher education fees to antiterrorism laws over the last two years and many more have defied him on individual issues.

"Anything below 60 would prove awkward in managing a parliament with Labour rebellions and could make Blair seem like an electoral liability," said Peter Kellner of pollsters YouGov.

A Reuters poll of political analysts and academics found most forecast Labour would win with a majority of 40-79 seats—firmly in that grey area which could hamper Blair's ability to govern.

In both 1997 and 2001, he won landslide majorities in the then 659-seat parliament of more than 160 seats.

"My own model predicts a 70-seat majority for Labour," said Paul Whiteley, professor of government at Essex University.

"But, and this is the 'but,' it doesn't take into account the turnout. The lower the turnout, the more Labour will suffer."

The UK's electoral map, which concentrates constituencies in Labour's urban strongholds, means the Conservatives must win a sizably larger share of the vote than Labour to take power.

But there is little doubt Blair's opponents have forced a real electoral contest for the first time since 1992.

In what some have seen as a sign of weakness, Blair has ushered his old rival and ally, Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, back into the fold, all but promising him he would keep his job after the election and restoring him to the heart of Labour's election campaign. *Reuters*

World leaders seek to breathe life into nuclear agreement

By Evelyn Leopold

UNITED NATIONS—Foreign ministers from around the world attempt on Monday to breathe life into a 35-year-old nuclear disarmament treaty whose credibility UN Secretary General Kofi Annan says is seriously challenged.

The United States, in the month-long conference that appears deadlocked before it even begins, wants the focus on Iraq and North Korea.

But the majority of nations complain that the nuclear powers, mainly the United States and Russia, have moved far too slowly in abiding by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), which calls for them to move toward dismantling their arsenals.

Iran threat

Iran threatened on Saturday to resume producing nuclear fuel. And North Korea, which said it has nuclear weapons and withdrew from the NPT, on the eve of the conference apparently launched a short-range missile into the Sea of Japan, adding to tensions.

The 188 members of the 1970 treaty, the cornerstone in arms reduction treaties, meet every five years to review progress and set new goals. Only the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China are permitted to have nuclear arms while all other countries vow to give up atomic warheads for good.

Nevertheless, Brazilian Sergio de Queiroz Duarte, president of the conference, said on Friday he expected some movement this week because many countries hold "their cards close to their chest until they have to take a decision."

Fraying

Still, Annan has several times expressed his apprehension that the treaty is fraying. He told a forum in February the NPT "faces serious challenges to its credibility."

Annan and Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, open the conference after which a host of foreign ministers, including Iran's Kamal Kharrazi, address the forum, which ends on May 27.

Kharrazi has scheduled private meetings with both ElBaradei and German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer.

But North Korea won't attend. India and Pakistan, which have nuclear weapons, and Israel, assumed to also have atomic arms, are not signatories to the treaty. The Bush administration, which has also scorned a nuclear test-ban treaty, is sending a mid-level delegation.

ElBaradei has called for a global moratorium on the enrichment of uranium and reprocessing of plutonium, the two ways of making fuel for atomic weapons. *Reuters*

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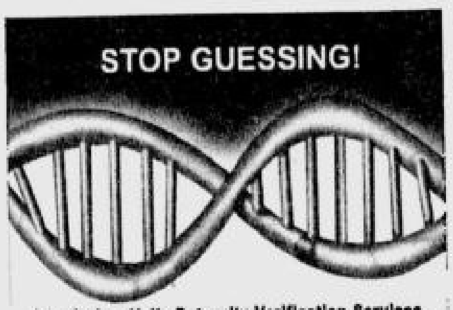

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N. Korea test-fires missile; US, allies downplay threat

SEOUL—The United States, Japan and South Korea on Monday played down North Korea's test-firing of a short-range missile off its east coast, saying it was not related to Pyongyang's drive for nuclear weapons.

US officials confirmed Sunday's test, a day before the opening of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty conference in New York, and called on its allies to express concern.

But they said they were not surprised by incident, the latest short-range missile test apparently timed for political impact.

"We're not surprised by this. The North Koreans have tested their missiles before. They've had some failures," White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card told CNN television.

"We have to work together with our allies around the world —especially the Japanese, the South Koreans, the Russians and the Chinese—to demonstrate that North Korea's actions are inappropriate," Card said.

"We don't want them to have any nuclear weapons, we don't want the Korean peninsula to have any nuclear weapons on it."

Japan, which neighbors North Korea and like the US is also involved in the six-nation process of trying to disarm the self-avowed nuclear power, said it was treating the test as a "domestic" drill.

"It was like a normal domestic military drill. It has no impact" on Japan's security, said Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda, the government spokesperson, as quoted by Jiji Press.

"The missile is intended for surrounding waters (of North Korea) and it is not like having a range of several hundreds of kilometers," he said, adding that it did not violate a moratorium promised to Tokyo in 2002.

Tokyo has been on edge over North Korea since the Stalinist state fired a Taepodong-1 long-range missile over Japan and into the Pacific Ocean in 1998. North Korea announced a self-imposed ban on longrang missile testing a year later.

South Korea also downplayed the test and warned against linking it to the nuclear dispute, which flared in 2002. The six-nation talks aimed at resolving it have been stalled for nearly a year.

"The missile that North Korea recently launched is a short-range missile with a range of some 100 km and is far from the one that can carry a nuclear weapon," Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon told Yonhap news agency.

"This is not a case to be linked to the nuclear dispute," he said, adding that Seoul had not seen any sign of nuclear testing by its northern neighbor.

North Korea in February pulled out of the six-way talks, also involving China and Russia, citing US hostility toward Pyongyang, and announced it had nuclear weapons.

In April it raised tensions further by shutting down its nuclear power plant in an apparent bid to unload and reprocess spent fuel for weapons-grade plutonium.

Previous short-range missile tests have been timed to send signals. In March 2003, it lobbed two short-range missiles into the East Sea (Sea of Japan) coinciding with the inauguration of South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun.

The latest incident follows comments from the director of the US Defense Intelligence Agency last week that North Korea is believed to be capable hitting US territory with a nuclear-armed missile. *AFP*

NORTH Korean construction workers from the Taean Friendship Glass Factory attend a May Day anniversary meeting in Pyongan Namdo, west of Pyongyang, May 1. REUTERS

Ex-US agri chief named Unicef head

UNITED NATIONS—Former US Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman begins her first day Monday as executive director of the UN Children's Fund, UN officials announced in a statement.

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan named Veneman, 55, to head Unicef in January. She replaces another American, Carol Bellamy, 63, who led Unicef for 10 years.

In the statement Veneman described Unicef as "truly one of the world's great institutions."

"I look forward to continuing Unicef's mission of serving children around the globe," she said.

Among her top priorities will be ensuring that Unicef works to advance the Millennium Development Goals, aimed at improving basic services for the poor and halving extreme poverty by 2015, the statement read.

The mandate of the UN agency is to promote advances in health, education and equality for children around the world.

Veneman is the fifth executive director in the agency's 60-year history, according to the statement. AFP

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Israeli soldier, militant die in raid; truce hit

SIDA, West Bank—An Israeli soldier and a Palestinian militant were killed in an army raid on the West Bank on Monday, putting further strain on an already tenuous ceasefire.

The Palestinian Authority condemned the dawn raid on the village of Sida as a violation of trust-building measures agreed by President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon when they announced the truce on Feb. 8.

The soldier was the first Israeli killed by Palestinians since militants formally agreed in March to follow the truce.

Another soldier was wounded, a military spokesperson said.

Sida is close to Tulkarm, which was handed over to Palestinian security control in March as a peace gesture.

"The continuation of Israeli incursions and assassinations is seriously undermining and threatening the cessation of violence," top Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said.

Israel says it reserves the right to go after "ticking bombs" —militants planning imminent attacks.

"Under no circumstances can Israel stop its efforts to protect our citizens by blocking attempted terrorist actions by the Palestinians," Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told reporters.

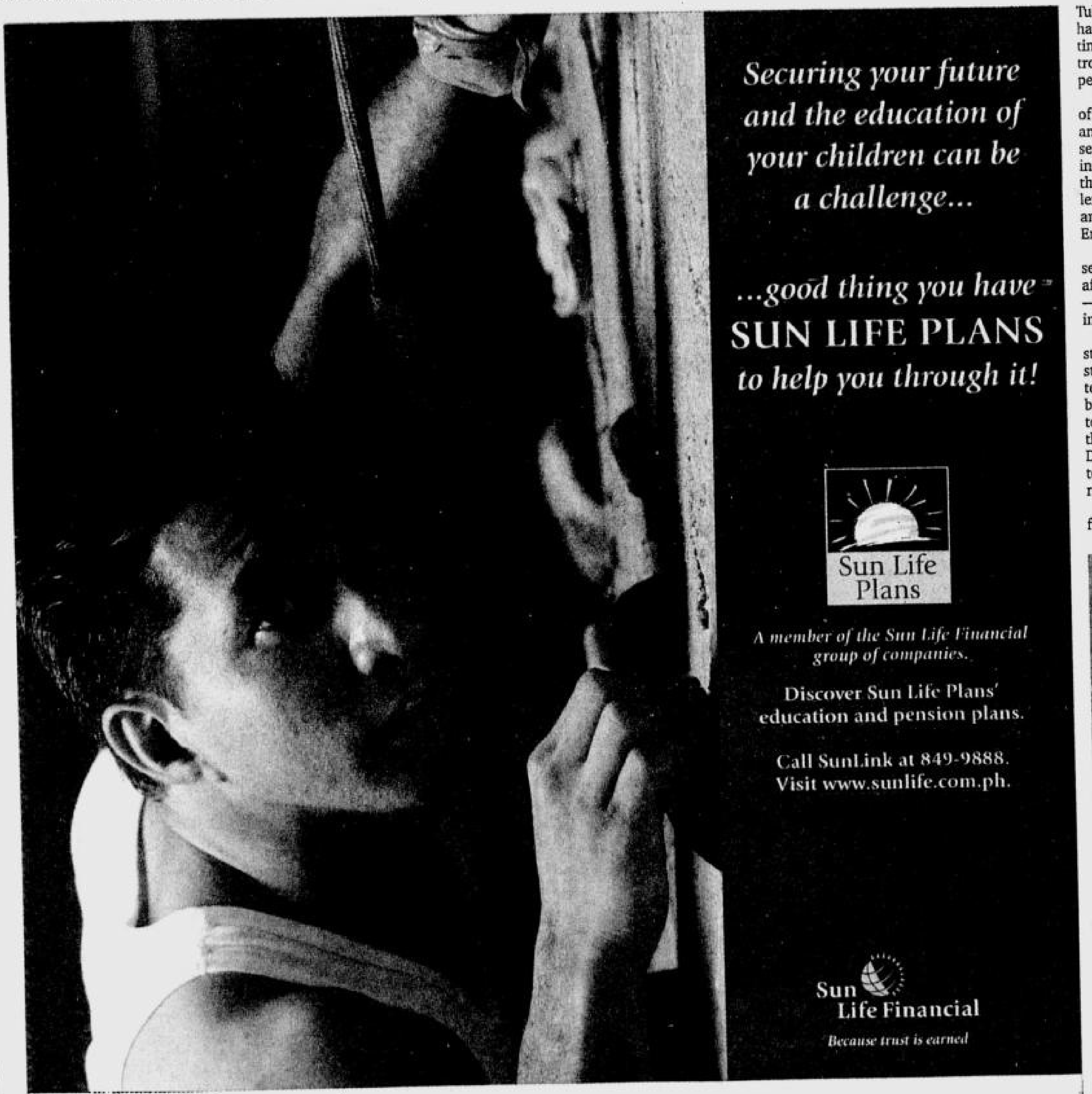
Residents identified the slain militant as a leader of the Islamic Jihad cell that carried out a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv on Feb. 25, killing five people.

He recently escaped from a Palestinian jail where he had been held in connection with that attack.

The last time Israeli troops killed a militant was during a raid on the West Bank city of Nablus on April 14.

Tulkarm was one of two West Bank cities handed over to Palestinian Authority security control. On Sunday, the army said it had captured an Islamic Jihad member near the city who had been planning to carry out a suicide bombing.

The ceasefire has raised hopes for a revival of Middle East peace negotiations, but Abbas has resisted Israeli calls to crack down on militant groups and said he prefers to use persuasion instead. *Reuters*



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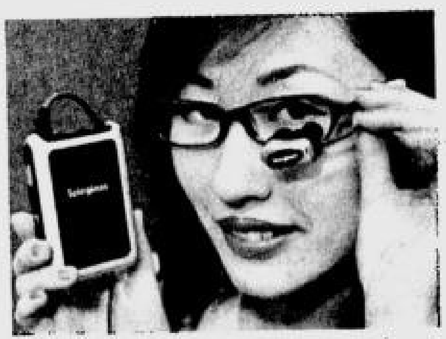

EMPLOYEE of Japanese microscope maker Scalar displays the "Teleglass" at the company's headquarters in Tokyo May 2. AFP

After Walkman, Japan comes out with 'Teleglass'

TOKYO—Two and a half decades after the Walkman personal stereo livened up commuting, the Japanese will get to watch full-length movies on the subway with a tiny screen hooked on top of eyeglasses.

The "Teleglass," which goes on sale in June, comes with earphones and a box that connects to a portable DVD player.

The wearer would see images as if watching a 14-inch television screen from a distance of one meter, according to an official at Scalar Corp., the Tokyo microscope maker that developed the Teleglass.

People can slap the tiny screen with a 0.24-inch liquid crystal display and lens onto one side of their glasses or those with normal vision can choose to use a pair of sunglasses.

The sunglasses could make them look cool —or it could indicate they are being mischievous. People nearby have no way of knowing what film is being played on the Teleglass.

Scalar developed the Teleglass jointly with Arisawa Manufacturing Co. Ltd., a Tokyo display materials firm. The gadget is priced around 50,000 yen ($475). AFP

Sihanouk's cancer worsening

PHNOM PENH—Cambodia's former king Norodom Sihanouk's cancer is worsening despite treatment, his doctors have said, days after he assured people that he was fit and was preparing to return home from China.

A statement from Beijing Hospital, where 82-year-old Sihanouk has been receiving regular medical treatment since January while staying at his palace, said that doctors had recommended he resume treatment for cancer.

The statement, posted on his website and dated May 1, said an examination in 2004 had revealed a gastric lymphoma, which was treated.

"Recent follow up showed progression of the tumor. Consultation with specialists was held and another course of chemotherapy suggested," it said.

It was unclear whether the doctors' diagnosis would disrupt plans for the former monarch to return to Cambodia next Sunday to head a new national border council.

Sihanouk said last week that he was in good health and apologized to "all those who want me dead," while his son, King Norodom Sihamoni, said he was energetic enough to chair the council.

SIHANOUK

A war of words had recently escalated between Prime Minister Hun Sen and Ruom Ritt, Sihanouk's mysterious pen pal whose letters are posted on his website. Sihanouk's impending return suggested a rapprochement.

The ex-king's planned return also sparked a decision by self-exiled opposition leader Sam Rainsy to come back to Cambodia next week to sit on the seven-member Supreme National Council of Border Affairs, to which he was named.

Rainsy fled the country in February after his parliamentary immunity was lifted, fearing arrest on defamation charges.

Sihanouk has been at the heart of Cambodian politics since he first ascended the throne in 1941. Since then he has abdicated, been head of state, toppled and sent into exile before finally returning to the throne in 1993. *AFP*

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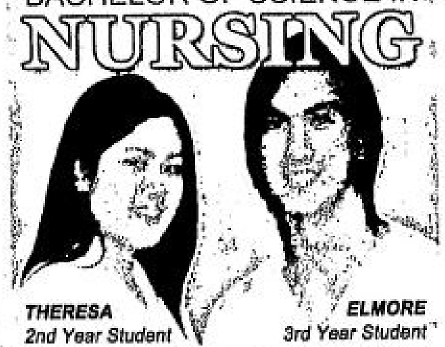

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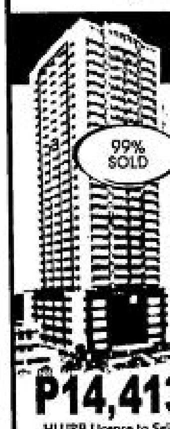

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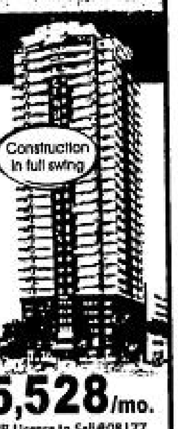

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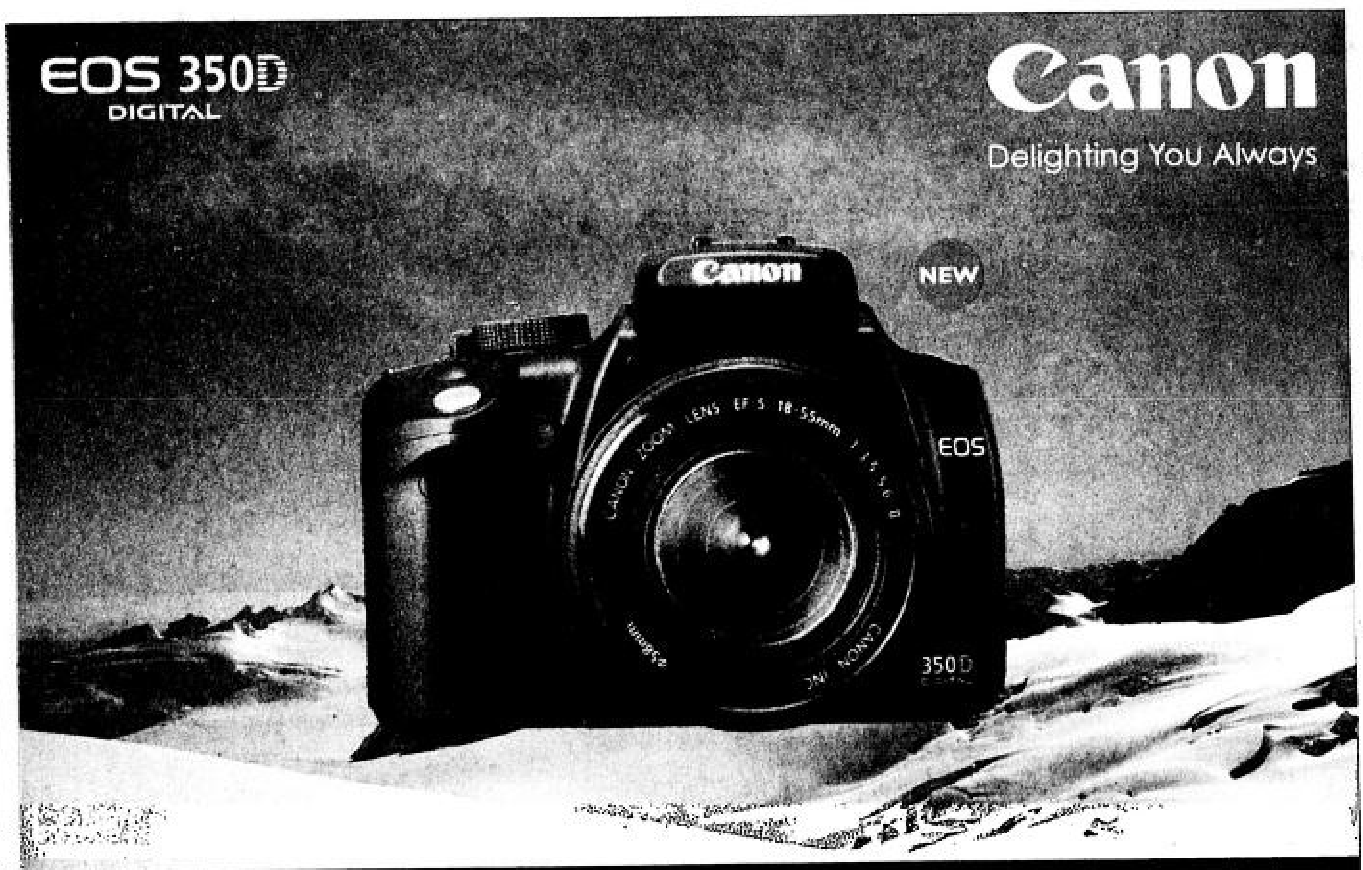

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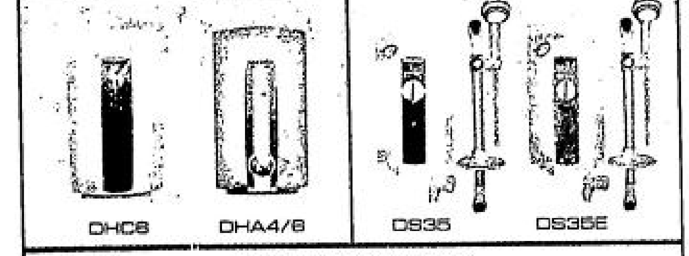

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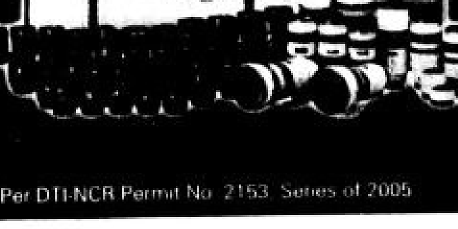

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Vulnerable

EDITORIAL

"THERE can be no press freedom if journalists exist in conditions of corruption, poverty or fear."

The Davao City chapter of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines issued this statement on the occasion of International Labor Day, but it could just as well serve as a general statement of the condition of the press as World Press Freedom Day is celebrated today.

Poverty and want make journalists vulnerable to corruption by government officials, politicians, businessmen, showbiz personalities and other people who want to manipulate the press. But for some notable exceptions in the national and Metro Manila press (such as the Philippine Daily Inquirer) and some community papers, journalists generally receive pay that is barely enough to meet the expenses of their family.

Aside from receiving low pay, many journalists also suffer from job insecurity and a big disparity in salary scales. Some reporters and most provincial correspondents are paid on a per column inch (or centimeter) or per story basis. There are very few newspapers that give their principal correspondents a monthly retainer or allowance and Christmas bonuses and other benefits.

Some journalists, hired as contractual employees, do not receive health insurance, hazard pay and overtime pay and other benefits mandated by law. Because they need to make both ends meet, some reporters take part-time public relations or writing jobs in the government, in politicians' offices or in private firms. Some people tell journalists, if you can't live on your present salary, why don't you get out of journalism? But many of these newsmen know only journalism and they love the work. If they leave journalism and engage in some other kind of work, they would feel like fish out of water.

Many journalists, especially community journalists in the provinces, constantly live in a climate of fear—fear of bodily harm and assassination. In the past 15 months, 17 journalists have been killed. Since the restoration of democracy and freedom in 1986 up to the present, 89 have been killed, according to one reckoning. (Other lists give a lower figure.) The killings cannot but have a chilling effect on journalists who have nothing but their pens—or their voices, in the case of broadcast journalists—to protect themselves. There can be no real freedom of the press if journalists constantly live in a climate of fear.

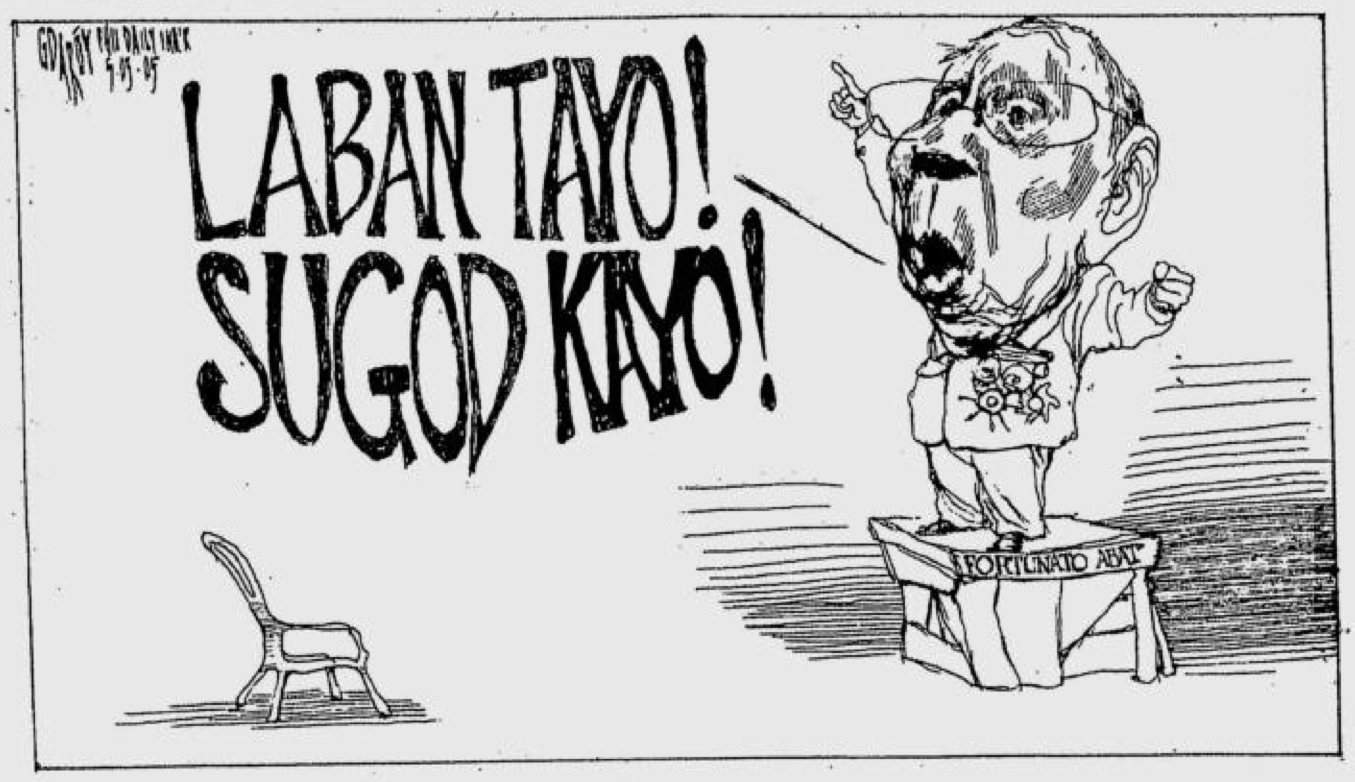
The government and the police have made a great show of forming special task forces and rounding up some suspects in some cases, but up to now no masterminds in the killings of journalists have been arrested, prosecuted and jailed. The killers are getting away scot-free. The climate of impunity is encouraging people who feel that they have been maligned by stories and commentaries written by journalists to resort to killing to obtain redress.

In some cases, journalists may not have been fair. Writing under deadline pressure, they fail to get the other side of a controversial or sensitive story. Fairness dictates that the view of the other side should be obtained so that a balanced story could be presented. Still, the failure of a journalist or a paper to present the other side does not warrant the extreme remedy of assassination. There are other ways of obtaining redress.

One way is to ask the editor of the newspaper to present one's side in a subsequent story or in a letter to the editor. If a journalist's error is very grievous, the offended party can ask that an inquiry be conducted by the newspaper concerned and if the journalist is found to have erred, that he or she be sanctioned.

Another way is to file libel cases against the supposedly offending papers and journalists. And yet another way is to file complaints with the Philippine Press Council, in the case of complainants in Metro Manila or national offices or companies, or with the still to be formed regional press councils, in the case of complainants in the provinces. But some news sources and subjects find these very time-consuming and very cumbersome and resort to violent methods to obtain instant results. And so the killing of journalists goes on.

As the nation marks World Press Freedom Day, let us pause, reflect and see what can be done to advance the cause of press freedom. People from other parts of the world, especially Southeast Asia, say that the Philippine press is one of the freest, if not the freest, in the world. But can a press that does not enjoy freedom from want and poverty (which makes it vulnerable to corruption) and from fear of bodily harm and assassination call itself truly free?



Sonnets and poison poppers

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

COMPARISONS have uses other than sonnets, as in Shakespeare's "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"

Contrast, for example, mundane transport schedules. Here, if a plane lands, a train or bus arrives, say 90 seconds late, we erupt with, "Bingo! On time." Not in Japan. In a nation obsessed, some say, with punctuality, a minute-and-a-half delay is disaster.

To make up for a 90-second delay, Ryujiro Takami, 23, drove his train for Osaka, around a sharp curve, bearing hard on the accelerator. The train slammed into a nine-story building, killing 101. Takami-san died in Tokyo's deadliest rail accident in four decades.

"The pressure to stay on schedule is so great," notes The New York Times. "On the bullet train's 40th anniversary, there was much hand-wringing over lines registering, on average, a delay—of six seconds... In the US and Europe, 'late' means a delay of six minutes or more."

Airlines hew to packed timetables. Japan Airlines admitted, this month, to "excessive focus on keeping to schedule."

Cebu Pacific stewardesses spin a standard arrival spiel: "We're the 95-percent on time airline." Defensively, Philippine Air Lines insists: "PAL means Prompt At Last," replacing "Plane Always Late"—a hangover of customer disdain that the previous monopoly spawned.

The Japanese should take time to smell the flowers, suggests Shigeru Haga, who teaches transportation and industrial psychology at Rikkyo University. Do we congenitally laid-back Filipinos sniff too many "blooms"? Many of us amble to appointments "fashionably" late.

Pope Benedict XVI apologized to German pilgrims for starting an audience five minutes behind schedule, the Vatican website reports. "Germans are a punctual people," the Bavarian-born Pontiff bantered. "But I'm more of an Italian now."

"L'exactitude est la politesse des rois," Louis XVIII once said. Punctuality is the courtesy of kings.

Joseph Estrada never bothered. Local officials would wait hours for high-stake mahjong games on the presidential yacht "Ang Pangulo" to end. Diplomats cooled their heels, victims of the previous midnight Cabinet hangover. "At four in the morning, I'd be the only one left sober," said then Presidential Chief of Staff Aprodicio Laquian. He was fired.

Time is money. And delays enable grafters to burrow in. Paper work for a Philippine enterprise takes 40 days, notes the World Bank study, "Doing Business in 2004: Understanding Regulation." In Australia, you need only two days.

The Philippines rigs 11 steps for business entry, notes consultant Peter Wallace. Compare that to Sweden's three. "If other countries can do it, so can the Philippines."

Compare "poison poppers."

In Mabini, Bohol, an elderly vendor cooking cassava fritters mistook powdery pesticide for flour. That snack killed 28 grade school kids, including the vendor's own grand-daughter; 77 were hospitalized. The National Bureau of Investigation filed 126 homicide cases against her.

Antique Rep. Exequiel Javier slipped the "poison pill" provision into the 1997 tax bill, former Socio-economic Planning Secretary Solita Monsod recalls. "The Lucio Tan companies cigarette companies were the main beneficiaries. And it cost government increasingly larger and larger amounts in annual lost revenues. Shamefully, that 'poison pill' was not taken out of the 2004 bill."

Even eminent economists would be hard put to quantify the "human costs" of Javier's "poison pill." How many patients did government clinics without drugs or doctors turn away? How many kids did without schoolrooms, books? And so on.

In Javier's district, the nutrition surveys show, 42 out of every 100 kids below six are underweight; 43 lack vitamin A. Iodine deficiency afflicts over half (56 percent) of pregnant women. Did beneficiaries of Javier's "poison pill" show their gratitude by reaching out to these "people of the short straw"?

Unlike the lowly Bohol vendor, charges were never lodged against Javier. "Laws and spider webs catch flies but allow the rats to escape," a Mexican proverb says. Can erring officials be made to quaff, like Socrates, pesticide-laced coffee instead of hemlock?

"Winston, if you were my husband, I would poison your coffee," a lady member of the House of Commons snapped at the prime minister. "Madame, if you were my wife, I should drink the coffee," Churchill retorted.

Compare coffins. Man, after all, is here today and gone tomorrow.

"All praise to you, my Lord, for Sister Death, from whose embrace no mortal can escape," Francis of Assissi wrote in "Canticle To Brother Sun."

Worldwide TV showed Pope John Paul II laid out in a rough-hewn wooden coffin. Like his Master, he left no material possessions. Vatican officials found John Paul's apartment, austere and bare of frills. And the Pontiff's last will and testament asked that he be buried in the bare earth. "You are dust and unto dust you will return."

The ornate glass coffin of Ferdinand Marcos in Batac provides a stark contrast. Year-round embalming services and the air-conditioned tomb attest to the vast material possessions of the deceased. In accordance with "Ferdie's last wishes," the vast Marcos wealth would be shared with the poor, Imelda said. How vast may be glimpsed in the $846 million in numbered accounts that PCGG's Haydee Yorac wrested back.

"There are only two families in the world, my grandmother used to say," Miguel de Cervantes of "Don Quijote" fame would recall. "The haves and the have nots."

The imposing Ilocos sarcophagus ensures there won't be any confusion which family the occupant in the glass coffin came from.

(E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

Things in common

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

WHAT do Raymundo Punongbayan and Haydee Yorac have in common?

First, they were both the INQUIRER's Filipino of the Year, the one coming after the other: Punongbayan 1991 (the first to be named so) and Yorac in 1992.

If I recall right, both were near-unanimous choices by the editors. The INQUIRER cited Punongbayan for his exemplary work in quite literally leading the country out of the wasteland. This was shortly after Mt. Pinatubo erupted, a ferocious tragedy that had the country, and the world, reeling from its impact. The INQUIRER noted in an editorial that what made Punongbayan exceptionally credible was that he was exceptionally "ordinary," he seemed just like one of us. "With his calm voice and warm paternal face wearing a twitch of a smile, he virtually took the helm of government and directed the nation out of chaos and ignorance in those days of massive mudflow, sulfur, pyroclastics and lahar."

The INQUIRER further noted that before this, he had helped the country recover from the killer quake that struck Baguio. He had been warning of it, this country being a land of volcanoes—social as well as physical, but that is another story—but no one would listen. Despite being handicapped by a meager budget, primitive instruments and bureaucratic indifference, if not greed, he eventually turned Phivolcs into a world-class organization.

Yorac was hands-down also the best choice for 1992, having helped epically to change the reputation of the Commission on Elections from the government agency that did not know how to count (it was the BIR and Customs that did, then as now) to one that knew the three R's. It wasn't just 'riting, reading and 'rithmetic, it was righteousness, reasonableness and resoluteness. Yorac's special accomplishment was bringing some semblance of order to elections in Southern Philippines, thereto an exercise in thwarting the will of the electorate, armed groups freely roaming abroad, villagers being massacred and ballot boxes disappearing routinely.

Of course, there were detractors. To this day, Miriam Santiago doesn't think Yorac's Comelec counted her and Fidel Ramos' votes right. It is a credit to Yorac's credibility—in stark contrast to Benjamin Abalos' more than a decade later—that the public would generally believe as, gleaned in survey after survey, that Ramos won the elections. And that Santiago was just having another of her delusional episodes.

Second, both Punongbayan and Yorac exemplified the true meaning of government official or public servant. They were people who did their jobs. They were people who, kept in office and paid for by taxpayers' money, repaid the taxpayers with unstinting service. In fact, they didn't just do their job, they did it to the best of their ability. To say that both wore an aura of unassailable integrity is to say that GMA tends to not do what she promises: It is to make the understatement of the year.

Punongbayan did his job quietly. He was never one to draw attention to himself, appearing before the media only when it was necessary to do so. To warn of dire things to come, to appeal to the public to take precautions, to explain the nature and extent of catastrophe to a nation in panic. He never appeared in a PCSO or Pagcor ad wading in knee-deep floodwaters (well, knee-deep to some at least), braving the lash of rain in a brightly colored raincoat (gray doesn't photograph well), or surveying the devastation wrought by a storm or earthquake with furrowed brow and an expression empathetic of pain. He wasn't after votes, or approval ratings, or self-advertisement. He just did what he had to do.

If the Huey he and his staff were riding hadn't plunged to the earth in flames, no one would have known what he, or his equally dedicated staff, were doing that day. Which was looking for ways to resettle the storm-ravaged folk in Gabaldon. Their trip would not even have registered a bleep in the media or PR radar.

Yorac did her job with feistiness, which was her character and which her job demanded. As Comelec head, she showed no fear of thug and warlord, and repeatedly drove them back to the hole they crawled out from. Unlike Santiago, who loudly proclaimed she ate threats for breakfast, a menu that clearly offered her little mental nutrition, Yorac just shrugged them off and did what she had to do.

As PCGG head, she did the same thing, defying thug and appointing power. Repeatedly she blocked Malacañang's effort to sell government's shares in San Miguel, which did not belong to Jose Pidal but to Juan de la Cruz, or whatever name coconut farmers go by these days. She argued the sale harmed the public interest in two ways: one, because it was disadvantageous to the farmers, even assuming the money from the sale found its way into their pockets, and, two, because it yielded control of SMC to Danding Cojuangco, the Marcos crony who ripped the coconut farmers off to begin with, when they were powerless to protest. Then as now, she would not be cowed.

Third, Punongbayan and Yorac are no longer with government. Indeed, Punongbayan is no longer on earth, plucked from our midst by the hand of adversity. Truly, we must wonder why heaven persists in tormenting us by depriving us of the loved and leaving us with the loathed. Yorac is no longer with government, plucked from her post by the hand of iniquity. The government office she headed is called the Presidential Commission on Good Government, and she took every word of that title seriously. Unfortunately, the person who appointed her to it did not, showing only a presidential commitment to bad taste. Yorac would have nothing of it. She resigned.

Next question: What do Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Joseph Estrada have in common?

Hot potatoes

Political Tidbits

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THERE are speculations that Haydee Yorac resigned as chair of the Presidential Commission on Good Government due to "pressure" from the Palace over the SMC share. But some people in the coconut industry suspect that a factor was her realization that the coco levy funds, now valued at over P100 billion, have become a hot potato even for her. At the Senate hearing, it was obvious that neither she nor Jose Querubin, president of the United Coconut Planters Bank, the custodian of those funds, knew for sure how it's being spent. For instance, just before Yorac resigned, concerned employees of the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF), the mother corporation of various subsidiary firms set up with coco levy funds, including a number of big oil mills, wrote to her to complain of the "abuses, graft and corruption and mismanagement" by its president, Rolando A. Golez. The CIIF president, who came from Lepanto Mining, was accused by these "concerned employees" of a "litany of sins," including making huge representation expenses, such as almost P40,000 for a reception for 30 people at a five-star hotel in Makati; extensive travel abroad for him and his wife; expenses at various golf clubs, hefty per diems and generally living a luxurious lifestyle.

* * *

The complainants backed their accusations with copies of vouchers and receipts, all paid with UCPB checks issued by Legaspi Oil Co., one of the CIIF oil mills, such as for two first-class round-trip tickets to Los Angeles amounting to nearly P402,000. The employees pointed out such huge expenses were not warranted by the company's poor fiscal health. As of February 2005, it had already incurred losses amounting to P70 million, an amount that was expected to shoot up to P100 million by March.

* * *

Yorac asked Golez as well as other CIIF officials like the auditor and finance officer to explain, but her resignation came not too long afterwards. There's also talk that CIIF chief finance officer Reynaldo Blas, who approved all the vouchers, has quietly resigned owing to poor health, but some suspect he did not wish to be embroiled further.

There was an e-mail circulated among the employees, purportedly sent by Rizal C. Ambanta, the CIIF auditor installed by Golez himself, that appeared to back up their accusations versus the latter. It's easy to see that this e-mail is spurious, and Golez, who reportedly claims to be "*malakas*" with the Palace, said in a statement to the employees that while the e-mail had "some factual information," these have been "distorted in pursuit of the letter-writer's evil intentions." He asserted that the letter was a "cowardly act ...packed full of lies." But the vouchers and receipts are hard to dispute.

Golez's luxurious management style may be a case for government auditors, but to those worried about the mishandling of coco levy funds, it's merely symptomatic of what appears to be the dissipation of the funds by those who are supposed to be taking care of them for the farmers.

* * *

Since I wrote a series about the private citizens who were defrauded of their hard-earned money by a syndicate at the PNB Sucat branch, more victims have come out to denounce the anomalies there. The syndicate of former bank manager Teresita Gregorio and public relations officer Gloria Miranda hoodwinked depositors of long-standing, taking advantage of their trust. The depositors are mostly retirees but there are a number of OFWs who worked for years abroad just to earn money for their children's education.

* * *

The duo made them sign blank documents, which turned out to be deeds of back-to-back loans they made on their own deposits. When the common "borrower," a man of Chinese descent, failed to pay the amortization, the bank seized the clients' deposits to pay for the interests. PNB has since dismissed the two bank officers, but it has refused to acknowledge its responsibility to return the deposits of its clients, now numbering over 20.

* * *

PNB's responsibility is compounded by the fact that the branch manager had been on the warning list from management for serious infractions for years but was retained in her position. It is most heartless of the bank to ignore these pleas. I hope that PNB chair Lucio Tan would step in and help his bank's depositors. Their collective claim probably runs into over P100 million, but it's a small price to pay for client confidence. Besides, for Tan this is just *barya*, but for these depositors it's blood money.

* * *

Reader Agnes Caibal recently wrote that her husband was also victimized by Gregorio and Miranda of their lifetime savings amounting to $30,000 using the same modus operandi. Jose M. Reyes, president of garbage-hauling firm Hinterland Freightliners Inc., also wrote to complain about the illegal action of PNB Sucat then under Gregorio. Reyes said his firm was paid over P16 million in hauling fees by the Parañaque city government, but some city officials requested him to withhold encashment of the checks as they needed to window-dress the city's books first; they promised to return them to him right away. Since they were friends, he agreed. While it was wrong of him to agree to this, the fact was that his checks were encashed by the city officials at the PNB Sucat branch, without a letter of authorization from Reyes who owned the account. It could only have happened with the collusion of Gregorio.

* * *

The victims have organized for group action, since the Philipine Deposit Insurance Corp. and Bangko Sentral have failed to help them. It's heartening that Bantay Katarungan, headed by former Senate President Jovito Salonga, has agreed to help them. Lawyer Emilio Capulong has been meeting with them. The alarming thing is that the PNB case seems to have been repeated in other banks. The House committee on banks should start an investigation.

May 1 observances

At Large

Rina Jimenez-David

A BELATED Labor Day celebration for me was the blessing yesterday of the water truck that the Maagay I Neighborhood Association (Mina) was able to secure through the women's party-list group Abanse! Pinay.

Maagay I is a sitio of Barangay Inarawan in Antipolo, in the hills surrounding Cogeo, occupied by about a hundred families who settled in the area in the early 1980s. The water truck, which will be used for a water delivery business, was bought with livelihood funds sourced through the office of then Abanse! Pinay Rep. Pat Sarenas.

I was met near Cogeo by our Antipolo chapter head Alma Bautista and then escorted to Maagay I, which can be accessed only through a steep, rocky and narrow road that winds through the Antipolo hills. Arriving at the assembly site, we were met by other members and officers of the Abanse! Pinay chapter and of Mina, led by its president Cecilio "Dan" Cruz, and Jess Zaguirre, head of the project committee that conceptualized and prepared the paper work for the water delivery business. Barangay and sitio officials were likewise part of the welcoming committee.

The object to be blessed was an unprepossessing truck with a fairly large water tank, painted white. On the drive to and from Maagay I, I noticed similar trucks on practically every corner, testament to the very important role such forms of transport play in communities in the vicinity. Inarawan apparently has yet to be serviced by piped-in water. Residents thus have to buy their water by the drum-full, which is not only expensive but also unreliable, at least in terms of potability.

* * *

THIS may have been the reason Mina's project proposal was approved. It's long been an irony that the poor end up paying more for such basic services as water, while receiving no guarantee on its safety. Water-borne diseases are a major cause of illness and deaths, especially among children, which is why there's a saying that clean water is the "cheapest medicine."

The water delivery business, then, is not just a means of generating income and employment among Mina members, while providing a vital service to the community, but also a grave social responsibility. "I hope I don't read or hear any news in the future about an outbreak of disease in Maagay because of unsafe water!" I begged the Mina members.

Presiding over the blessing was Bishop Gabriel Garol of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines who also happens to be Alma's father. In his message, he stressed the need for "thankfulness," as well as for a spirit of service among all Christians.

The bishop also advised the Mina officers and members to ignore as much as the possible the provocations of another group of homeowners in the area who are embroiled in a land dispute with Mina and have attempted to sabotage their projects, including throwing spikes in front of the water delivery truck.

In his talk, Cruz not only expressed determination to continue with Mina's water delivery project despite the attempts to derail it, but also to pursue other endeavors for the good of the community, including digging a deep well to make water even more available to the neighborhood. It was in sum a most fitting way of paying tribute to the working class, especially our friends in Maagay I.

* * *

MAY 1 also happens to be the death anniversary of my mother, Narni Braganza Jimenez. In the first few years after her passing, we used to miss the start of the Jimenez clan's annual observance of "Flores de Mayo" because we would gather either at Loyola Memorial Park in Marikina or at our family home in Cubao to remember Mama.

This prompted our surviving aunts and uncle to "assign" May 1 to our branch of the clan, not just so we could dedicate the day to Mama, but also so we could be present at the start of our annual Flores.

This year, May 1 was extra-special because we were also observing Mama's 25th death anniversary. It doesn't seem all that long ago that we lost Mama to her first heart attack, but we had unmistakable evidence of it: my son Piepie was six months old at the time of Mama's death; his cousin Jami was born just a month before; and another cousin Cesi was born less than a month after. They all either just turned 25 or will be 25 soon. And with their cousins, they have only vague memories of their grandmother.

* * *

IT WAS for this reason that we siblings decided to put together a memorabilia corner dedicated to Mama at the basketball court of Pacific Malayan Village in Alabang, where my brother Bo and his wife Coratec live and where we held the start of this year's "Flores de Mayo."

We gathered family pictures and various items and mementoes of Mama: a carved camphor chest that she gave me as my "hope chest"; a matching coffee table that can now be found in my brother Nono's home; and most famously, handmade quilt blankets that Mama made and gave away as gifts. We also prepared an audio-visual presentation to give a "thumbnail" view of Mama's—and Papa's—personal history, though even as we worked on it, we were beset by the realization that we could never hope to even approximate the richness and complexity of her life.

As always, it was exhilarating to meet with our Jimenez and Braganza cousins and their families. For us Jimenezes especially, this year promises a rich harvest of memories as we will be spending the last weekend of May in our "second hometown" of Tacloban. As Tita Ansing, our host in Tacloban, threatened during our discussion of the trip: "If you don't go to Tacloban this year, you should change your family name!"

We'll be there, Tita Ansing, don't disown us yet!

How to lose a war

Sense and Sensibility

Bambi L. Harper

MANY of us might think that all this talk of a parliamentary government and federalism is something new. But apparently way back in 1899, the Visayans had already indicated their preference for this type of government as can be gleaned from a letter from 35 signatories who referred to themselves as "natives of the island of Luzon, called the Tagalog colony." The letter was addressed to President Emilio Aguinaldo.

It appears that a federal state was established in Sta. Barbara, Iloilo, by Raymundo Melliza, Jovito Yusay, Ramon Avanceña, Julio Hernandez, Francisco Villanueva, Pablo Araneta, Francisco Soriano, Nicolas Jalandoni, Magdaleno Jovellano, Florencio Tarrosa, Fernando Salas and "an infinite number" of others. At a meeting held in February of that year, Melliza proposed the continuance of their federal state "to avoid the central government of Luzon monopolizing our wealth." These gentlemen felt they should have been "the owners and only ones called upon to administer our wealth and to govern ourselves in all the islands that the Visayas comprise."

The signatories of the letter considered the attitude highly unpatriotic and General Diokno was "greatly displeased" upon hearing about it. He felt it showed "little fraternity" between the Visayans and the Tagalogs and thought that the natives of Luzon should all feel "injured" by such disdain for the new constitution. The Visayans, he thought, were "belittling" the sons of Luzon, himself included.

What apparently led to this perception was the snob of Diokno's forces by the Visayan governors, who neglected to (a) pay their wages, (b) maintain them and (c) take care of their other needs. Diokno's men must have then tried to feed themselves by whatever means, but they ended up committing unspecified abuses, according to the Ilongos.

The writer excuses these as being forced by "sacred necessity" unlike the Visayans who were "guilty of the most horrible crime" (none specified) which he felt went unnoticed. It appears that Diokno's army would take coconuts or chickens or vegetables and this would soon be grist for the gossip mill all over the province. Several complaints regarding these incidents were sent to Aguinaldo who ordered the general to place himself and his forces under Gen. Martin Delgado. This didn't appeal to Diokno, who turned over the command to Lt. Col Timoteo Marcella and returned to Capiz.

In the meantime, one of the men of Marcella was murdered in the barrio of Vito in Cabatuan. Believing rumors that there was a move to disarm his forces, Marcella decided that the better part of valor was to move to Capiz, too.

In July Marcelo Goles, a commissioner of the government of the Visayas, arrived from San Isidro complaining that he wasn't received with the consideration due to his position by the Luzon government. In retaliation, the Visayan authorities decided not to send any more commissioners since they couldn't secure anything for their efforts.

Now the letter writer begins to hint of another possibility, which was that there were those among the Visayans "who wish the soil on which they were born to become American." Most of the refugees in Sta. Barbara were returning to their towns of Iloilo, Jaro, La Paz and Molo, territories under the Americans. According to them, they preferred it because they had more liberty and were making money doing business with the Yankees. For one, they paid well and, wonder of wonders, treated them better "as they never could have expected."

The letter further states that the authorities of the province were leaning towards surrender to the Americans from what appeared to be the close contact between Melliza and Araneta whose houses in Molo were beside the American barracks. This prompted the Tagalogs to describe them as the "first Americanistas."

Their suspicions were buttressed by their observation that Gen. Martin Delgado had discharged at least 1,000 soldiers while the American forces had increased by 1,500. The reason given was lack of money, but the Tagalogs claimed that the Visayans were reluctant to levy the wealthy who appeared unwilling to contribute anything. The Tagalogs felt they were being discriminated against, as evidenced by the demotion of a Tagalog, Leocadio Ludovico, from colonel to captain by the Ilongos although his rank had been recommended by the Luzon government.

Another officer, Lt. Elpidio Mañalac, had been sent to Malolos from Iloilo with some documents in connection with the actions of the American forces and had left his family in the care of the Visayan authorities. Upon his return 27 days later, he found them destitute since they had been given only five pesos for their sustenance during his absence. Another Tagalog, Capt. Claro Omaña, was replaced as captain of the General Staff by a Visayan sergeant of the Ilongo volunteers who was now first in line for a promotion to major.

When the native contingent of the Spanish army arrived in Iloilo from Iligan, the government refused to accept them and shipped them to Negros whose authorities did not permit them to land but instead sent them to a desert island where "they suffered untold privations."

More complaints along the same lines follow and one wonders what impact it may have had on the colonizers' opinion of us.

(Exhibit 1260. Original in Spanish. John Taylor, "The Philippine Insurrection")

* * *

Comments to bambiharper@yahoo.com

The silence of action

Young Blood

Anton Conejos

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

WE are graduating from college at a unique time—for the world, our country and even ourselves. The challenges facing us today are radically different from those that defined our parents.

The unspoken assumption in our heads is that previous generations had it easy. Back then the competition for jobs or a decent education was less fierce. There was less traffic, less crime, and even the peso-dollar exchange rate was less. But the world of yesteryears, as rose-colored and inviting as it may sound, is not our own.

Paradoxically, the youth of today is hailed as the hope of the nation and in the same breath dismissed as apathetic. Passion, desire, zeal, the fire to make one's own life are all gone, replaced by the listlessness of an automaton, going through the motions of living impervious to its wonders, majesty and grace. Inspiration for us is encapsulated in the ad line, "Impossible is nothing" (and please buy more sneakers). We are all, in the eyes of the old guards, hollow men and women. We only care for ourselves.

It is easy, faced with this veritable avalanche of doubt from our elders, to succumb, to retreat into one's shell and care for nothing, do nothing. If previous decades were marked by fiery activism, our generation looks like the hangover after the party, wishing only to be left alone. Since we live in an uncertain time, unique in its confusion and dissonance, can anyone blame us if we retreat into our shells and snap, like crabs, at anyone who dares disturb us? What difference can one person make in a sea of six and a half billion people? We do not care because it's the only defense mechanism we have against a world that seems so foreign and alien.

"The [student] of today is less sure that he is born to lead or that even his type of education is 'relevant'. We find the [university] today irrelevant to the Philippine situation because it can do no more than service the power elite." These words could have been written by anyone among those who dismiss our generation as apathetic and impotent. But they were taken from a 1969 yearbook, the untried and naive defining themselves in a time that also seemed strange and unknown. And they still resonate with us.

Certainly, each generation has the privilege of calling itself unique, different in terms of expression and difficulties faced. Yet the realization that the questions we face are not so different from those with which our forbears had to grapple with gives us reason to hope. They too encountered a world that was seemingly chaotic, where the possibility of change seemed small. Indeed, the truly great questions never really change; what do change are each generation's answers to them.

But the questions we have are the same ones that motivated previous generations. Thus, we find in solidarity with the past an impetus to move forward.

What about the charge that we are apathetic? The angry words from the 1969 yearbook and our identification with them would imply that youth and idealism are by now (ironically) ossified oddities, irrelevant and obsolete. Yet the very venom behind the statement implies a deep current of passion, a strong wish that our schools do not become ivory towers perched on commanding heights, a commitment to construct a place which is not a tower but a lighthouse, a beacon in the darkness. Hopefully, we all placed a brick or two with our small acts of kindness during our four years at the university. Kudos to all those who volunteered for different committees, who sweated blood every Saturday for their socially oriented organizations. A hearty slap on the back for everyone who still takes the trouble to say thank you and do other simple acts of civility. All these are essential. The best of us will go out and build lighthouses of their own.

We may not be the most vocal about our passions and commitments. Yet our silence is not born of indifference but it comes with humble action. Excellence is after all not only exhibited in noisy, highly visible affairs but in mundane, everyday activities. In tying to be relevant, perhaps it is best to note what is irrelevant, superfluous. While words can be valuable, they are easily cheapened by overuse. In our country today, there may be a lack of food and water and an economic crisis, but the rhetoric of blame, charges and countercharges flourishes. For words to once again have value they must become scarce. Gustavo Gutierrez once said, "Theology is talk constantly enriched by silence." Precisely, it is through the silence of concrete action that we are all called to express our idealism, our zeal, our hope.

It has become fashionable to chastise those who opt to head for greener pastures beyond our shores. Our country is often pictured as a sinking ship. And there is no shortage of recrimination for those who choose to jump ship, exchanging mangoes for apples, Jose for Joe. Unfortunately, there is not even the tiniest reproach for those who stay behind. While everyone is heckling those who left, who's taking care of the damage caused by the idiot who placed unleaded gasoline in the diesel engine? Who's trying to close the hatches so the seawater would stop gushing in? While everybody's blaming the captain and the captain is blaming his (or her) first officer, who's controlling the ship? For those of us who remain, there is plenty of head shaking instead of nodding, fists in the air rather than hands extended to help others.

Never mind those who leave, the real problem is those who stay. Maybe someday, if more people will stop pounding the deck, making spectacles of themselves, and instead patch a leak or two, the ship will stop sinking. Maybe someday, there will be no more groups but simply one big group and we will realize the ship wasn't sinking at all but merely stalled. But combine "maybe" and "someday" and the result is "mayday," the international call of distress. For this ship to sail, we all have to change maybe to certainly, someday to right now.

It is tempting to give in and go quietly into the good night. Much has been lost and much can still be lost. To accept that our country and even the world are beyond redemption is easier than to attempt change. Yet the desire for something better refuses to die, refuses to be erased.

The art of being human in the modern world lies precisely in taking up the call to make things better. But one constant in all works of art is the need to reintroduce color in a world of gray, replace absence with presence. Implicit too in art is that it is for someone. Similarly, the graduating students of Batch 2005 are meant for someone, for everyone. Our lives can be art if they are dedicated to making the world a little bit better for all.

Anton Conejos, 21, graduated last March, major in Literature and minor in Philosophy, from the Ateneo de Manila University.

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A sad day for coco farmers

HAYDEE Yorac's resignation from the PCGG was a sad and disheartening setback for millions of coconut farmers. During her term, the government was able to recover the United Coconut Planters Bank and the some 27 percent SMC shares from Danding Cojuangco and his cronies. The courts have declared that these assets are public, held in trust by the government for all the coconut farmers.

The coconut farmers believe and trust Ms Yorac, knowing that she stands by the truth and pursues justice for them. The coconut farmers need someone like Yorac because the coconut levy cases have not yet been resolved with finality. The case of the Bugsuk farm and some 20 percent SMC shares in the name of Cojuangco are still being heard.

Yorac would have done well to protect the farmers' interest on the planned sale of the 27 percent SMC shares. Her presence will be enough to ensure that the funds and mechanisms that will be put up will really benefit the poor coconut farmers and the industry.

Now that the coco levy cases are winning in courts, so many people, so many politicians and organizations want to have their fingers in the coco levy pie. Suddenly, so many are concerned for the farmers and the coconut industry. That is why the coconut farmers cannot let their guards down. They should remain vigilant and demand that the government consult them before deciding on matters regarding the coco levy funds.

We need people like Ms Haydee Yorac, people who will stand by what is right and make sure that justice is served to those who suffered in the hands of Marcos cronies—like the 3.4 million farmers and farm workers.

—LIZA C. CONDINO
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Demented sense of job generation

THE MOST revolting reality of the Arroyo administration's job generation program is its long-standing trafficking of Filipino women. The government is the "chief trafficker" of Filipinas. This shows in its announcement of 23 new destinations for displaced overseas performing artists, following the imposition of tighter immigration controls in Japan.

When Japan's stricter immigration law took effect on March 15, 2005, the Arroyo government did not lift a finger to assure the safety, rights and well-being of the overseas Filipinos workers affected by it. Instead, the government looked for more locations to which it could deploy Filipino women entertainers for further abuse and exploitation.

The Department of Labor and Employment even boasted that a study, cited in the 2004 annual report of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, found South Korea, Bahrain, Brunei, China, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Diego Garcia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Saipan, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Singapore, Spain, Taiwan, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, and Vietnam as growing alternative markets for Filipino entertainers.

Most of these countries have a record of abuse and maltreatment with Filipinas as victims. Now the government wants more Filipino women to go to these nations as entertainers.

Appropriately, a US State Department report in June 2004 classified the Philippines as a Tier 2-Watch List nation. The report described the Philippines as "a source, transit, and destination country for persons trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor." The "trafficked" description includes those who are deployed as entertainers and are forced into prostitution with or without government's consent.

The efforts to "study markets" and pursue the deployment of Filipinas to jobs linked to the web of human trafficking in the world is evidence of the current administration's demented sense of job generation.

—CONNIE BRAGAS-REGALADO,
chairperson,
Migrante Sectoral Party,
115-B Kamuning Road,
Quezon City

Again, non-official use of gov't cars

I REALLY find it difficult to figure out how the government can save P144 million in power bills through a four-day workweek schedule that certain government offices have been directed to adopt during these summer months. It is true that these offices can minimize electricity use by an equivalent of eight hours every Friday. But it is equally true that their power consuming facilities would be on for an extra two hours daily from Monday to Thursday, or also eight hours per week. Where, then, are the savings? With all due respect, the proponent of this four-day workweek scheme appears to know only how to subtract, but not to add.

Meanwhile, if the government really wants to save on fuel bills, it should put more teeth to the ban on the use of government vehicles for non-official business. That ban was hot news several months ago. This summer, one needs only to count the numerous red-plated vehicles that are parked near malls, churchyards and picnic grounds during off-work days to find out that the said ban is more honored in breach than in practice.

—RUDY L. CORONEL,
10 Venus St., Golden Country Homes,
Alangilan, Batangas City

Low-cost, countrywide railway system possible

NOT a few have dismissed outright the idea of a Philippine national railway due to the high costs that it is projected to entail. Thus, it is prudent to look into the individual cost of each of the projects already identified.

Anyway, low-cost or otherwise, if we have a countrywide railway system, we can hasten the growth of our economy, introduce necessary social changes, accelerate our development and even will have in hand one sure effective measure against the "peak oil" phenomenon (which, by the way, has been predicted to take place before 2010—possibly in 2007—by ASPO, a network of scientists affiliated with European institutions and universities.

However, the information that we have raises some deep questions about the train projects. For instance, in the six jobs that have been looked into—based mostly on published data—we have detected some truly inexplicable and very large differences. Concentrating on the per-kilometer cost, we have established the following: NorthRail (China BOT; rehabilitation, dual track, Caloocan-Malolos, 33 km) - $15.24; Panay Rail II (Philippine Veterans Development Corporation and European consortium; rehabilitation, single track, Roxas City-Iloilo City, 117 km) - $5.21; Mindanao (Department of Transportation and Communications, EDCOP and ARUP, Greenfield; single track, Iligan-Cagayan de Oro-Davao, 418 km) - $2.13; Panay Rail I (DOTC, PDC and TC; rehabilitation, single track, Roxas City-Iloilo City, 117 km) - $1.60; PNR Southline (Philippine National Railway, CNTI and CNMIEC; rehabilitation, single track, Calamba-Legazpi, 423 km) - $1.48; and Cebu (Industrial Research Foundation, Inc., Greenfield, Double Track, Danao City-San Fernando, 62 km) - $0.98.

The cost differences may be explained by the fact that among the six, only the Mindanao and Cebu projects expect to use good pre-owned equipment—the Cebu project especially, which will involve refurbishing rails, as well as locomotives, locally. There is also the labor that will be employed. Foreigners have come, or will come, for most of the projects to bring over their expertise in the construction phase. Foreign project management and engineering are quite costly. So far, only the Cebu project is bent on Filipino labor, engineering and management, which is the least expensive choice. Furthermore, it contemplates the use of time-tested and market-oriented technology. The Cebu project will also depend on reverse engineering and locally fabricated spare parts. This will inevitably lead to technology upgrading as the market demands for faster trains.

—F. S. BALDIVIA, JR, chair,
R. M. VILLARICA, Ph.D., treasurer
Industrial Research Foundation, Inc.
fbaldivia@irf.ph.net

Are we afraid of the Truth?

ANTONIO J. Montalvan II's column "Tossed by tempest" (PDI, 4/25/05) is worth commending. In these times when "relativism," "materialism," "hedonism" and other "isms" degrade man's dignity by adhering to the dictates of the flesh, man forgets the very reason and meaning of his existence.

I wonder why the term "conservative" connotes a negative meaning to most of us. Why are we so afraid of it? From what I came to believe in, what is being conserved here, especially by the Pope (the late John Paul II and Benedict XVI) is the Absolute Truth and the Good. Are we so inconvenienced by the Truth and the Good that we allow ourselves to develop a wrong understanding and use of freedom?

—ANA MARIE D. HIPOLITO
22-13 Torrevista St., Carmenville Subd.
Angeles City 2009

A Church breathing with two lungs again

THE COLUMN of Manuel Quezon III, "Victory for orthodoxy" (PDI, 4/20/05), was very encouraging. As an Orthodox Christian, I am praying for the eventual restoration of full communion between the Roman Catholic Church of the west and the Orthdodox churches of the east. I hope that the day will come when the universal Church of Jesus Christ will be breathing with two lungs again.

There was small error in the column which I want to point out. Quezon stated that Catholics and Orthodox share so much in common, except in the belief of the primacy of the Pope. Let me state that the Orthodox Church has always recognized and accepts the primacy of the Roman See. Unfortunately, even though Roman Catholics and Orthodox use the same word to refer to the primacy of St. Peter and his successors, Catholics and Orthodox attach different meanings to the word. In Roman Catholic theology, the classic definition of "primacy" equates to absolutism, some sense of monarchy. The pope is above the episcopate. The Orthodox, on the other hand, has always understood Rome's primacy as a "primacy of honor"—the popes of Rome being the first among equals in the universal episcopate. The Roman See simply cannot claim any exclusivity. While Rome was the place where the holy apostles Peter and Paul were martyred (and this ultimately contributed to its great prestige), it was the only apostolic see in the western part of the Roman empire. On the other hand, most churches in the east rest on apostolic foundation.

I'd like to refer you to two excellent articles on this subject at URLs: http://www.goarch.org/print/en/ourfaith/article8523.asp and http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/general/greatschism.aspx.

—MISAEL BALAYAN
Mililani, Hawaii
mcb.hawaii@verizon.net

Rebels violating Geneva Convention

I WONDER what the children felt when they were used as shields by elements of the New People's Army during an encounter with soldiers at Sinait, San Juan, Ilocos Sur. Innocent as they were, they were unwilling victims of conflict between people of different ideologies.

To save their own lives, rebels grabbed the two children and held them hostage until the former could scamper for safety. The soldiers, on the other hand, limited their attack against the rebels for fear of hitting the children.

The NPA commonly recruit minors into their movement to augment their dwindling number. They even allow them to carry a gun and get them into gunbattles with government soldiers.

The rebels are aware that arming children for war violates provisions in the Geneva Convention (Protocol 1, Article 77), yet they continue with this illegal wrong practice. What do these communists care about these children? As long as children serve their purpose, they don't care if they are killed or deprived of a bright future. They don't even give a damn as to the harm armed conflicts inflict upon children.

The souls of these rebels are already burning even before they are in hell.

—MANUEL DELA CRUZ,
Teresa Street,
Old Sat. Mesa,
Manila

Compulsory 'cancer test'?

CANCER kills many Filipinos every year because of their ignorance. This can be prevented by helping them detect cancer at its early stage. And this can be done easily and painlessly through the so-called Beta Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (HCG) Urine Immunoassay test, which was developed by Dr. Manuel Navarro, a Filipino, who found that HCG is present in all types of cancer.

Because this test detects HCG in urine, thereby indicating the presence of cancer cells, even before signs and symptoms of cancer are revealed, the government must make it mandatory for adult Filipinos, except oncologists for obvious reasons.

Don't you think so?

—TB ABAYAN
13-A Banning St.,
North Fairview, Quezon City

'Land of Promise' at brink of despair

IT used to be that Mindanao was known as the "Land of Promise." Now Mindanao is known as the "new Mecca for terrorism."

And that's nothing to be proud of. Instead of promoting the beauty of our vintas, our Muslim culture and our coral seas, tourists veer away from our country. Other countries issue travel advisory banning the Philippines as tourist destination.

All because of the alleged cuddling of the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorists group which is said to have links with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

It's a pity for our Muslim brothers. They are deprived of the economic prosperity that they deserve. The Mindanao problem should be addressed immediately by the present dispensation if it wants to save the country from the brink of desperation.

—ABDULLAH ABUJARAK,
Upper Bicutan, Taguig City

War bells

WITH ALL due respect, Rev. Msgr. Leonardo Medroso is incorrect in saying that the historic bells of Balangiga are inappropriate trophies of war. ("Wyoming vets opt to return historic bells of Balanginga," PDI, 4/18/05) They were used to signal an attack on US military forces; as such, they are valid trophies of war.

However, I do feel that in the spirit of friendship between our countries, and to put the painful past between our two peoples behind us, the United States should return the bells to the Church. It is the right thing to do. The Philippines and the US are very good friends now, I hope that friendship deepens and lasts forever. Warm regards from a friend in the United States.

—STEVE MARTINOVICH,
jabaker81@hotmail.com

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INQBOX

Three top beneficiaries code-named M1, M2 and JS7, relatives of a top government official, allegedly rake in millions of monthly jueteng money. Your reaction?

I can NAME that TUNE in 3 Notes: MIGUEL, MIKEE & JOSE.
—JJ PURUGGANAN, 35, *manila*

Wow parang James Bond pa-code code pa sila, mga kilala naman. Kunwari maka-mahirap, yun pala sila ang magpapahirap sa tao.
—Matt, 27, *Camarines Norte*

so, what else is new?
—ramon g. lukban, *quezon city*

walang kaduda sila ang tatlong M. mandurokot ng mamayang mahirap. 3 m's.
—ging tubeo, 39, *malaybalay city*

Naming the Arroyos behind jueteng codes M1, M2 & JS7 is too obvious 2 ignore. After all, who was it who stayed in a 20,000 dollars hotel suite in Las Vegas? You be the judge! Now d ball is in Ping's favorite court—Senate inquiry.
—jerome escobedo, *cebu city*

They shld be exposed and investigated. The tentacles of evil wud surely stretch to many people in power
—Tyrone Guya, 30, *Manila*

alam na ng mga senador kung cno ang mga yan... Papogi points lng yan ni drilon!
—jorgejill duyaguit, 29, *calatrava*

BORING. SHOW PROOF! D public isn't short-minded or gullible enuf 2 be fooled by gossipy propaganda. Wont we?
—rene locsin, *QC*

easy MONEY...and LOTS OF IT! surely the answer to every Filipino's financial need nowadays. HOW TEMPTING!! wow! gus2 ko din ng milyons monthly!
—mary joan preclaro, 24, *antipolo*

hmmm...there they go again! wala na bang katapusan yan?!
—cynthia g. enriquez, *marikina*

pipol shud stop rumors n jus start talking if dey hev hard evidence
—ma. Elena b. Naidas, 43, *antipolo city*

If the whistle-blower had concrete evidence then he should name names. Kung wala, he better shut-up.
—Cesar Marinius M. Reyes, *Agusan del Norte*

yan nga!
simulan na ang
pagbabago!

what i think is that they M1 m2 js7 shud not du dat coz they shud know dat our country is having problems..
—Leandro Ramos, *sta rosa, laguna*

if the allegations are true, apt punishment is to shoot them, the official and the President. useless maggots & leeches
—trudis sapitan, 26, *mal, bulacan*

D corruption jueteng money buys further weakens d moral fiber. It is illegal, d will 2 enforce d law seems 2 be lacking.
—Rizalde Cabrera, 39, *Olongapo City*

obvious naman kc sila lang ang makagagawa ng ganyang anomalya hanggat nasa kapangyarihan sila.
—edison milano, 47, *taguig*

issues on jueting been ther many times, we dont know whom 2 believe lacson or mike, only god knows!.. Wat a sad plight!
—tes pinili, 50, *zambo city*

Let Sen.Lacson reveal d name of d whistleblower n let him do d talking n not anybody else. Stand up n be heard.
—Florentino S.B. Torres, 44, *Pasig City*

we need 2 have strong evidence 2 nail these people in court, and d wheels of justice move without derailment by d powers dat be.
—NIDA GACAD, 50, *QC*

the people of d nation are responsible 4 d creation of diz monsters by continued patronage of jueteng.
—fernando Mendoza, 42, *lian, batangas*

mike, mikey and iggy. what else is new? legalize jueteng is da only answer against any benefactors.
—noel sta ana, 42, *parañaque*

Do you support the move of leading advertisers to pull out of top showbiz TV talks shows that broadcast sex video scandals?

i support dis move coz it promotes responsible media practice; it dramatizes protests against nonsense news coverage.
—nathaniel baladjay, 33, *sta rosa laguna*

ya, i support that move bcoz it can raise even a little a bit d morality, as well as d dignity of d Filipino people..
—anthony aquino, 16, *gapan city*

Wala ng rason pa para manood ng TV.
—L. Decena Martin, *San Agustin, Isabela*

Ang tagal naman. They should have withdrawn their ads nuon pa...
—Cesar Marinius M. Reyes, *Agusan del Norte*

No, bc0z it wil b a big l0ss 4 d tv c0mpanies if d advertisers pull out of these tv talk sh0ws.~
—aldwin legaspi, 20, *bacolod*

Sex video scandals must n0t b open 4 d public 2 see. it will increase d curi0sity of viewers. MTRCB shud n0t apr0ve any sex vide0 on Tv.
—Ralphmar Onez, 18, *CDO*

O.A. lang sila, MTRCB must discipline d shows if they show offensive &lewd show, n0t d advertisers dat will m0ve like dat!
—gene gulanes, 43, *davao city*

yes, i support these moves. we have many problems to tackle rather than watching those videos that i think will not help us that much.
—carmela dorde, 20, *guinobatan*

its about time producers of these shows realize that they are NOT doing anyone a favor. Pinapalaki lang nila ang kanilang kita. d pipol behind these sh0ws think viewers are stupid. Enough is enough. Thanx advertisers, joey reyes & co.
—annie nisce, 43, *qc*

Yes, but its a stopgap solution. TV Stations should already clean up their content. We can be showbizzy, without being scandalous.
—Sherwin chan, 24, *manila*

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'Jueteng' spells trouble for cop chief

By Luige A. del Puerto

IN A MOVE apparently meant to show that the police are serious in their anti-illegal gambling campaign, a regional police commander whose name has been repeatedly linked to *jueteng* would be removed from his post this week, according to senior police official.

"Something has to be done about him. So the PNP chief (Director General Arturo Lomibao) ordered his 'promotion.' He will head a directorial unit here in Camp Crame," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"In other words, he's been relieved. No officer will just say that openly," he said.

Chief Supt. Rowland Albano, chief of Central Luzon Police, will now head the PNP-Directorate for Research and Development, the police official said.

He said a relative of a government official did not want Albano to leave Central Luzon, considered a "paradise" region because of its supposedly huge *jueteng* payoff.

"He does not want Albano out of Region 3. But something has to be done," the official said.

Reached to confirm the report, Deputy Director General Oscar Calderon said Albano would indeed head the police's research unit starting this month.

"The order would have come out by today (May 2)," said Calderon, chief of the PNP Directorial Staff.

"He will be replaced by Chief Supt. Alex Lapinid, chief of the Mimaropa (Mindoro-Romblon-Marinduque-Palawan) region."

But Calderon said Albano has not been sacked. Far from it, Albano has in fact been "promoted."

"He will be occupying a position that requires a two-star general. That's a promotion," Calderon said.

Calderon said Albano is among the most senior officials on the field, and he is qualified to head a directorial unit.

He said Chief Supt. Rodolfo Tor, the current chief of research, would most likely head the Directorate for Plans.

This minor reshuffle is prompted by the impending retirement of Chief Supt. Vic Luga, former head of the research unit. He is supposed to retire in July but he has already filed a "non-duty status" so he could enjoy the last two months of his life on vacation in the police force.

For this, Calderon hailed Luga as a "fine officer who should be an example to all."

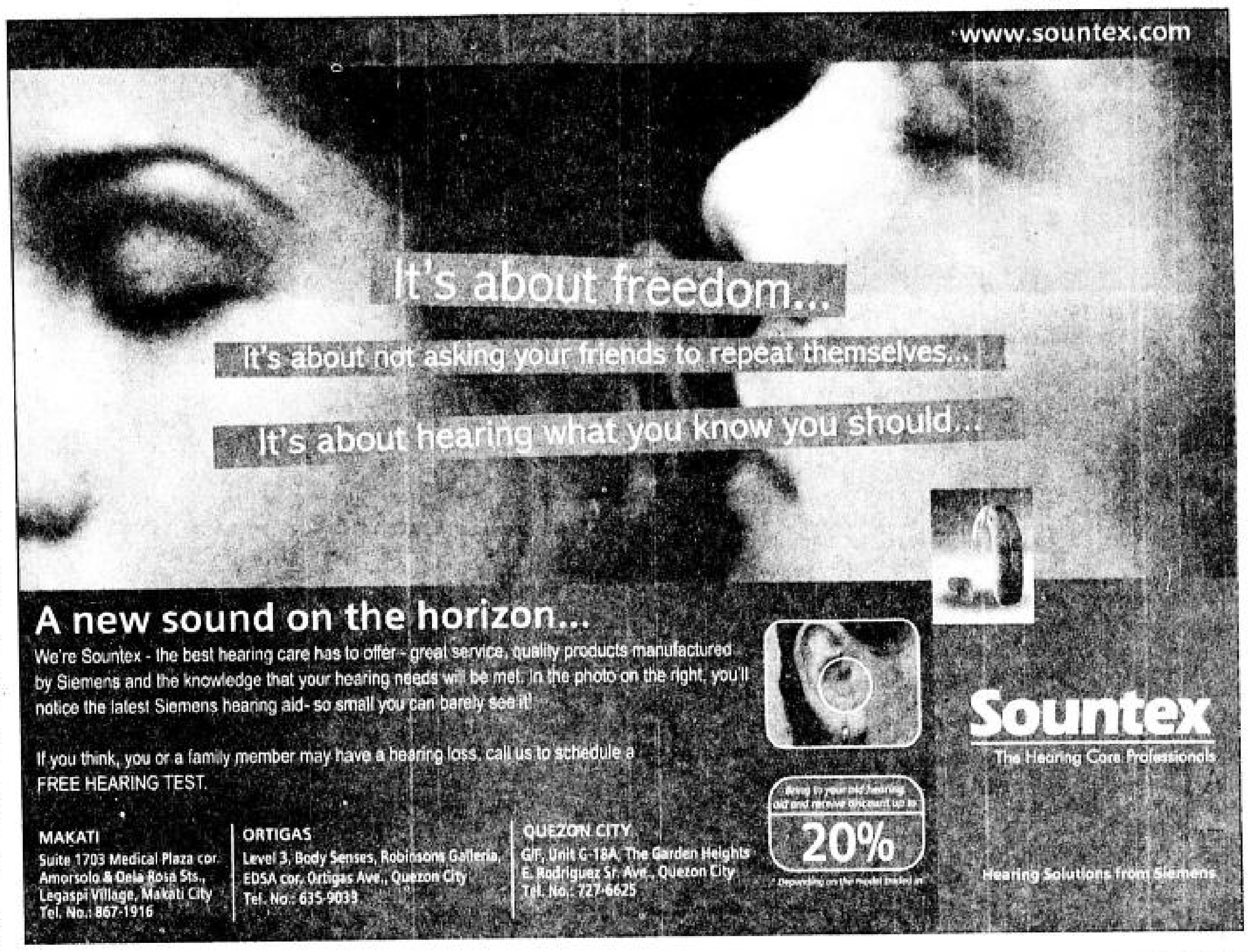
"He meant to give way to others," Calderon said.

Police and military officials rarely file a "non-duty status" when they have just a few weeks in service. In fact, many officers leave the service grudgingly.

A top police officer in Region 5, for example, wants an extension even when he is set to retire soon, an official familiar with the move told the INQUIRER.

Last week, a ranking police official disclosed that three relatives of a top government official have been cornering the *jueteng payola*, estimated to be millions of pesos monthly, in Southern and Central Luzon.

CHIEF Supt. Rowland Albano carries a cross last Good Friday and may have to carry a cross of what some of his colleagues said was "promotion." REUTERS



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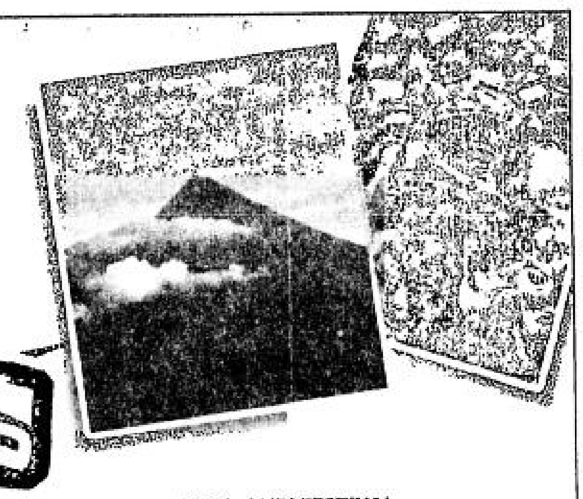

I ♥ PHILIPPINES
Biyahe Na!
Calendar of Festivals & Events 2005

FLORES DE MAYO / SANTACRUZAN
May (month long) | Roxas Blvd., Manila; Glorietta Mall, Ayala Ave., Makati City; Parañaque City
A procession of maidens dressed in beautiful gowns. It is a thanksgiving event in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Contact: Makati City c/o Ms. Rosalinda Cervantes, Chief, Museum & Cultural Affairs Tel: 896.2464; Parañaque City c/o Ms. Josephine Orozca, Chief, Tourism Office Tel: 829.0691

NCR SHOWCASE (PHILIPPINE'S BEST)
Continuation: May 01-15 |
Clamshell I, Intramuros, Manila
A showcase of the different tourism products of NCR (destinations, events, services, souvenir items, entertainment, and facilities) accompanied by various cultural presentations.
Contact: DOT - NCR Office or Regional Monitoring Staff, Tel: 524.2421

VIVA VIGAN FESTIVAL
1st Week of May | Vigan, Ilocos Sur
A festival rich with history and heritage, cultural treasures and reminiscences.
Contact: Vigan Tourism Council, Tel: (077) 722.2466 or DOT Regional Office I

BALANGAY FESTIVAL
May 01-31 | Butuan City
A month-long fiesta celebration of Butuan City characterized by the Mutyahong beauty pageant, sportsfest, and Santacruzan.
Contact: Ms. Liwliwa Esguerra, City Tourism Officer / (085) 225.4041 / (085) 342.7729 or DOT Regional Office XIII

MAGAYON FESTIVAL
May 1-31 | Albay, Bicol Region
A festival in the merry month of May, showcasing Albay and its cultural heritage, trade, travel and tourism beyond majestic Mount Mayon.
Contact: Ms. Fe B. Arroyo/ (052) 480.4956 or DOT Regional Office V

MANTAWI FESTIVAL
May 5 | Mandaue City, Cebu
A showcase of the city's historical heritage and identity promoting the city as an industrial and tourist hub involving a memorial of the Spanish regime through street dancing, dioramas, floats, heroes and great personages as higantes, food festival and sports events.
Contact: Mrs. Tonette Pañares / City Tourism Office Tel. (032) 343.9091 or Contact: DOT Regional Office VII

ISLAND PARADISE ADVENTURE RACE
May 07 to 15 | Series 1:
Rainbow Chase (Luzon Leg)
A 9-day auto rally through 8 tourist destinations/provinces in Luzon based on an "on time, all the time" system, featuring 35 teams. Each team shall be composed of 3 persons who will be required to perform certain physical and mental challenges at designated control points. At stake are top prizes in cash (P1M, P300,000 and P100,000 for the top 3 winners) and in kind, including trophies and recognitions.
Contact: DOT-DMPD c/o Annabelle or Faye at Tel #'s: 523.90.31 / 536.31.35 / 524.22.51

BATTLE OF BALETE PASS (DALTON PASS)
May 10 | Nueva Ecija
A commemoration of the day US forces captured a strategic pass that forced Yamashita to retreat to Nueva Ecija.
Contact: Department of Foreign Affairs – American Affairs, DL: 834.4738 or DOT Regional Office III

HARVEST FESTIVAL
May 11-15 | (Lucban, Sariaya, Tayabas, Gumaca), Quezon
A celebration of the feast of San Isidro de Labrador that includes a thanksgiving celebration to the Lord for the good harvest and abundance of agricultural production for the entire province.
Contact: DOT Regional Office IV

BATTLE OF BESSANG PASS
May 12 | Ilocos Sur
US Forces & Guerillas defeated the Japanese in this famous battleground.
Contact: Department of Foreign Affairs – American Affairs, DL: 834.47.38 or DOT Regional Office I

PULILAN CARABAO FESTIVAL
May 14 | Pulilan, Bulacan
This is a procession featuring carabaos kneeling in front of the church of San Isidro de Labrador in Pulilan accompanied with a parade of decorated floats.
Contact: Office of the Mayor/ (044) 795.01.28 or DOT Regional Office III

SANGGUTAN FESTIVAL
May 18 | Barugo, Leyte
A dance of local wine enthusiasts honoring the age-old process of wine-making
Contact: Mayor Juliana Villasin, Barugo, Leyte, T: (053) 331.4019 or DOT Regional Office VIII

REGION X SHOWCASE (PHILIPPINE'S BEST)
May 19, June 05 | Clamshell I, Intramuros, Manila
Region X is presented in a showcase of tourism products that will enable the public to experience and behold the region's beauty at its finest.
Contact: DOT Regional Office X or Regional Monitoring Staff, Tel: 524.2421

SOUTHERN FEAT: THE TRAILBLAZING CHALLENGE (ISLAND CARAVAN PROGRAM 2005)
May 20-24, 2005 | Cagayan de Oro-Butuan-Surigao-Siargao-Davao
A project in line with the DOT's "Biyahe Na" promotional series consisting of tour packages that have a well-defined itinerary with varied programs and activities prepared for group travel allowing tourists and domestic travelers alike to learn and experience the Philippines at its best.

FOR INQUIRIES, CONTACT: ISLAND CARAVAN TOUR CONSORTIUM: T.R.I.P.S Travel (02) 752-4772 / BARON Travel (02) 817.0203 / ANNSET HOLIDAYS, INC. (02) 400.6521 / MARSMAN Tours & Travel Corp. (02) 887.0000 local 302 to 306 / TRAVEL EDGE (02) 845.2230 / RAJAH TOURS PHILS., INC. (02) 522.0541 / SECRETARIAT: SAMPAGUITA Travel T: (02) 892.1121 or (02) 817.7620 / F: (02) 892.1123 / Email: sampaguita@compass.com.ph

LUBI - LUBI FESTIVAL
May 22 | Gingoog City
A cultural dance festival of the city featuring the coconut as one of its major agricultural products.
Contact: DOT Regional Office X, DL: (8822) 723.696 or (8822) 726.394 / (088) 856.40.48

MANGGAHAN SA GUIMARAS
May 22 | Guimaras
A commemorative celebration of the anniversary of Guimaras as a province and to showcase the premier produce of the province (mango) and the various local attractions.
Contact: Ms. Angie Gabinete, Cell: (0919) 409.08.78 or DOT Regional Office VI

PASALABUK FESTIVAL/ LINGGO NG DIPOLOG
May 24 | Dipolog City
Festival starts a week earlier & culminates on July 1 with colorful ethnic-inspired street dancing.
Contact: Ms. Cecil Bilog, Tourism Officer (065) 212.24.85 or DOT Regional Office IX

PAGGALANG SA WATAWAT
Launching: May 28 | Alapan, Imus, Cavite
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SLEEPY RIDE
A worker tries to catch some sleep in a truck loaded with motorcycles for delivery in Dagupan City.
TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Controversial general wants more soldiers

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Major Gen. Jovito Palparan, head of the 8th Infantry Division, has asked the Armed Forces of Philippine headquarters for about 300 more soldiers to be deployed to Eastern Visayas in an apparent move to boost his anti-insurgency campaign.

"If we have more troops, the enemies would just collapse even without fighting. The more troops we have, the easier for us to solve the insurgency problem in the region," Palparan told the INQUIRER.

At present, there are more than 6,000 soldiers and Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) members assigned in the Eastern Visayas region under the 8th IB based in Camp Maulong, Catbalogan, Samar.

The 8th ID is composed of three brigades and nine battalions spread in Leyte, Samar, Masbate and parts of Bohol.

Palparan said that with additional soldiers, he expected a swifter action in his anti-insurgency campaign in the region.

Palparan has repeatedly announced that he intends to finish off the region's communist rebellion within six months to a year.

Focus

Although he did not specifically say where these additional soldiers would be deployed, Palparan said his "intensified" military operations would be focused in the three Samar provinces—Samar, Northern Samar and Eastern Samar—where the strength of New People's Army (NPA) is concentrated.

Gen. Roberto Ver, head of the 801st Infantry Brigade, welcomed the request of Palparan for more troopers, saying these would "definitely help in our campaign in solving the insurgency problem in the region."

He said he expected these soldiers to be deployed to his unit because his area of responsibility falls within the category of "most active" as far as the anti-insurgency campaign is concerned.

The 801st IB is based in Camp Eugenio Daza, Barangay Fatima, Hinabangan town, Samar. It covers nine towns of Samar and the entire 23 municipalities of Eastern Samar.

The Northern Samar area is under Col. Bernard de Luna of the 803rd ID based in the capital town of Catarman.

Palparan earlier said there were about 1,000 active and armed NPA guerrillas spread throughout the region, a majority of them based in the Samar provinces.

Enemy strength

While the NPA strength was lower compared to that of the government, he said the requested forces would still be needed.

He said that in contrast to their enemies, the government troopers were exposed and not in hiding, which make them easy targets.

Palparan said that since he assumed his post on Feb. 10, soldiers had died at the hands of the NPA guerrillas.

"And for the last three years, we have lost 217 soldiers, to include some civilians and government officials killed by them (NPA)," Palparan added.

Last April 8, five soldiers were killed in an ambush staged by the communist rebels in Barangay Camlongan, Calbiga town, Samar.

Suspected poacher flees airport cops

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—They got the birds but the man who tried to smuggle them escaped.

Senior Supt. Rey Lañada, Philippine National Police (PNP) Palawan provincial director, said he was fuming mad when he learned that the suspected wildlife smuggler who was supposed to be in his men's custody eluded them at their own station at Barangay Tiniguiban.

Suspect Francisco Yatco was brought to the PNP provincial headquarters after he tried to smuggle out two eagles and some squirrels on April 27 through the Puerto Princesa Airport.

Insp. Dilbert Salimbagat, Aviation Security Group-Palawan chief, said Yatco brought the boxes containing the eagles and the squirrels to the X-ray machine at the airport.

The boxes passed the X-ray machine because the contents looked like fighting cocks, which are normally shipped, Salimbagat said.

Yatco, a Manila-based businessman who regularly flies to Palawan, managed to check in the boxes.

But while transferring the boxes to the aircraft, a suspecting baggage boy opened one of them because something inside was moving.

When he discovered the eagles, police immediately brought Yatco to the PNP provincial office.

But the suspected wildlife smuggler managed to leave the investigation room unnoticed.

Jofelle Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

MILF backs mayor vs USaid official

COTABATO CITY—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) yesterday defended Mayor Muslimin Sema, who was accused by a ranking official of United States Agency for International Development (USaid) of coddling and supporting international financiers linked to terror groups.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu told the INQUIRER that USaid mission director Michael Yates' accusation against Sema, also concurrent secretary general of the Moro National Liberation Front, was unfair because it was not supported by solid evidence.

The MNLF signed a peace agreement with the Philippine government on Sept. 2, 1996. Members of the influential Organization of the Islamic Conference brokered the peace deal.

"It's only a product of speculation. It's only fair that Yates would issue a public apology," Kabalu said.

But Kabalu also admitted that there was a possibility that financiers of international terrorist groups "pass through" the region.

"We cannot deny that because even in Metro Manila they also drop by," Kabalu said.

In a letter to Sema, Yates said they have been receiving reports that international financiers linked to terror groups are passing through the region with his knowledge and support.

Sema, who filed a diplomatic protest, condemned Yates, saying his accusation was baseless.

Sema's supporters, numbering to 2,000, burned a replica of an American flag in a recent indignation rally at the city plaza here.

In the same rally, Sema declared Yates *persona non grata* in his city.

Kabalu said the USaid office in Manila should have conducted an investigation first before informing Sema of the reports it received.

Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza has also called on Yates to prove his allegations.

The USaid, through its Growth and Equity and Livelihood Enhancement and Peace, helped former MNLF combatants as part of its commitment to the peace agreement signed by the Philippine government and the MNLF.

Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau

New casino in Subic draws 300 foreign tourists, local players

By Allan Macatuno
PDI Central Luzon Desk

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—This former American naval base is a step closer to having a reputation of being a paradise for local and foreign tourists-cum-gamblers on this side of the country.

This loomed after another casino was formally opened on Sunday, drawing more than 300 guests from Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, Cambodia, Australia and Myanmar.

The Subic Diamond Casino, which operates under a license granted by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor), boasts of its fully computerized operating system and a "sophisticated" casino management team with international experience.

The new casino happens to be standing in front of the Legenda Hotel, which operates the first casino inside this freeport.

The INQUIRER learned that Legenda officials have been claiming the exclusive rights of running a casino here. They have reportedly questioned Pagcor for allowing Subic Diamond Casino to operate.

But a Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority official, who was present during the opening of the new casino, said the "conflict" had already been resolved.

Top executives of the Subic Diamond Casino said they have selected Subic as its location because of tight security, easy airport access and its natural scenic attractions.

"The Subic Diamond Casino is the first and only safe alternative gaming place outside Macau. We have built something that we can be proud of," Ben Lee, Subic Diamond vice president for casino projects, said.

"We expect the new casino will attract a large number of visitors from East Asia," Lee added.

The grand opening was held with traditional Chinese dragon dances and colorful merry making.

Hong Kong's top model, Kathy Chow, was one of the guests. She was conferred the title of "Hong Kong tourism ambassador" to Subic, whose role is to invite Hong Kong people to visit the freeport.

"I am glad to show you an exciting and fascinating resort situated in the northern part of the Philippines. There you will find a perfect blend of natural beauty and rich cultural heritage with stimulating experience," Chow said.

The Subic Bay Diamond Entertainment Corp. (SDEC) manages and operates the casino. To assure the continuous arrival of tourists, CR Airways launched on April 30 its direct flight from Hong Kong to Subic. Three round trips have been scheduled by the airline every week.

200 fishermen protest Pangasinan gulf pollution

DAGUPAN CITY—More than 200 fishermen from the coastal towns of La Union and Pangasinan aboard 75 fishing boats launched on Sunday a fluvial protest to generate awareness on the condition of the Lingayen Gulf.

The fishermen timed the protest with Pangasinan's celebration of the Pista'y Dayat (sea festival) to generate attention to the gulf, their main source of livelihood.

"We want to highlight the problems affecting the gulf and of the small fishermen. While Pista'y Dayat is meant to thank God for the bounty of the sea, the sea has no more resources to offer to us. The small fishermen are dying," said Pablo Rosales, president of the Progresibong Alyansa ng Mangingisda sa Pilipinas.

The fishermen stopped at a beach in San Fabian town to explain to beach goers their concerns and problems, among these the deteriorating quality of fishing grounds due to unregulated aquaculture and illegal fishing.

The fluvial protests started simultaneously in Sto. Tomas, La Union, and in Bolinao, Pangasinan, at 7 a.m.

The groups met here and released a six-foot paper boat where their issues and concerns about the Lingayen Gulf were written.

A statement from the Kilusang Mangingisda ng Pilipinas said fishermen wanted local government officials to stop commercial fishers from using destructive fishing methods that deplete the resources of the gulf.

"Our local governments are deaf and blind to such injustice [from] commercial fishers," said Marlo Mangaloa, a fisherman from Sto. Tomas.

Ruperto Aleroza, a KMP member, said the frequent incidents of fish kill in the Lingayen Gulf are "reflections of the gulf's dying ecosystem."

Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

COOL GETAWAY
RAY ZAMBRANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU
Teenage tourists explore Virgin Cave, one of the more than 100 caves in the Hundred Islands National Park, which has yet to be explored although the Alaminos City government, under Mayor Hernani Braganza, is promoting the islands as an ideal tourist destination.

Govs' league hits COA over non-consultation

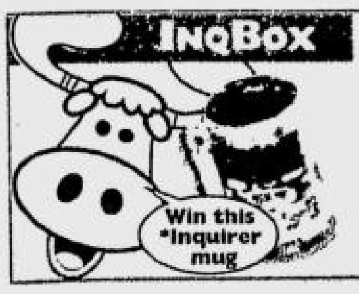
MAASIN CITY—The League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP) has scored the Commission on Audit for releasing circulars and issuing rules and regulations (IRRs) without prior consultation with the league.

In a resolution approved during the LPP 5th general assembly in Bohol, the LPP lamented that COA "failed to consider the peculiar circumstances and needs of local government units (LGUs) in the issuance of the IRRs which has undermined local autonomy and delivery of basic services."

The LPP hierarchy said that due to COA's failure to inform the league of these issuances, "many LGUs were subjected to disallowances, in the process jeopardizing the delivery of the basic services."

It said that by not informing the LGUs of these issuances, the COA has violated the Local Government Code that required national agencies to "conduct periodic consultations."

Jani Arnais, PDI Visayas Bureau



INQBOX **Question of the Week**

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Senders of d best 20 texts as publishd in Tuesday's **INQBOX** *wiL each receiv an "Inquirer Mug! U*

Key in: Inquirer news name/age/city/message.
Text your answers to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart).
(Maximum of 160 characters)

*Metro Manila winners can call Jane at 8978808. Provincial winners can text: inquirer ad name/city/mailing address to 2207 or 283 as their prizes will be mailed to them.

Inquirer
menu

ROUNDUP

Rice shortage bucked

PAGADIAN CITY—Western Mindanao will not experience a rice shortage even during the lean months of July to September and the projected effects of the El Niño weather phenomenon, according to the National Food Authority. Ernesto Macasinag, NFA regional director, said at least 1.1 million bags of rice had been allocated for distribution in the region, depending on demand. Around 600,000 bags of rice from Vietnam were recently unloaded at the Zamboanga City Port. *Michael Sarcauga, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

5 rob suspects captured

BALAGTAS, Bulacan—Police arrested five suspected robbers before they could flee from the house of their victim in Bocaue town on Friday. Chief Insp. Eufemio Espino, town police chief, identified them as Reynante Celeste, 29; Joseray Abris, 35; Ignacio Conio, 25; Dominador Tulin, 41; and Melchor Manzano, 37. The suspects allegedly shot and wounded Manuel Goltiao, a veterinarian, after he refused to give them the P150,000 he was carrying. Policemen caught them before they could escape on a Nissan Sentra and a motorcycle. Police said the group was also behind the robbery and killing of two businessmen in Sta. Maria town and San Jose del Monte City recently. *Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

2 die inside deep well

ILAGAN, Isabela—A pastor and his companion died of suffocation when they slipped and fell into a well in Barangay Marana 1st here on Thursday, police said. Supt. Romeo Uy, town police chief, identified them as Mar Lopez, a pastor of the local Pentecostal Church, and Pablo Agtarap. Uy said the victims and two other men were building a 12-meter deep well. Police said smoke emitted by a portable generator set placed inside the well suffocated Lopez and Agtarap. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

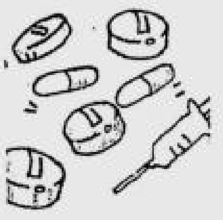
Abad defends council setup

MAASIN CITY—Education Secretary Florencio Abad has allayed fears that involving local officials in managing schools would encourage political patronage. Abad earlier proposed that public schools be governed by councils to be composed of representatives from the Parents-Teachers Association, local government units and the Department of Education. But some teachers feared that politicians might interfere in school procurement operations and that the councils would abet political patronage in the selection of teaching applicants. Abad said that the DepEd was implementing reforms to ensure that the procurement process would be corruption-free. He said community involvement would strengthen and improve local governance of basic education in the country. *Jani Arnaiz, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Cassava vendor denies raps

TAGBILARAN CITY—A vendor accused of selling cassava fritters that caused the death of 26 schoolchildren and the hospitalization of over 100 others in Barangay San Jose, Mabini town on March 9 has denied allegations of mass poisoning. Ana Luyong, who has been charged with multiple homicide by the National Bureau of Investigation, said she "did not put any other ingredients in the '*maruyang bulanghoy*' (cassava fritters) . . . that I cooked and sold on that day." She submitted her counter-affidavit on April 14 with the Office of the Provincial Prosecutor. The NBI said the frying pan and cooking oil Luyong used in cooking the snacks had coumaphos, an organophosphate insecticide. *Chito Fuentes, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Cool to contraceptives



DUMAGUETE CITY—The city government is opposing a proposal that local government units allocate money to buy contraceptives with the impending cut in the supply of family planning materials from the US Agency for International Development. Vice Mayor William Ablong, a staunch critic of artificial methods of family planning, said the city government had already rejected the idea last year when its health office first presented it. Echoing the stand of the Catholic Church, Ablong said the city government was not promoting the use of contraceptives which he described as "anti-life, anti-women and anti-health." *Romy Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Business assistance desks

TACLOBAN CITY—The regional, provincial and city offices of the Department of the Interior and Local Government in Eastern Visayas have put up business assistance desks to create and ensure an environment conducive to investments and business in local government units. William Paler, DILG regional director, said the desk officers would provide information and advise local and foreign investors on how to effectively deal with LGUs and local communities in ensuring the success of business projects. *Vicente Labro, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Tacloban power rates up

TACLOBAN CITY—After nearly five years of demanding payment, the city government will finally receive some P26 million in franchise tax from the Leyte II Electric Cooperative (Leyeco 2). But paying the tax means that the cooperative will have to increase its rate by 15 centavos per kilowatt-hour in June, when the city starts collecting P1.4 million a month for the next 18 months. At present, Leyeco 2 charges P4.87 per kWh from residential consumers and P5.05 per kWh from commercial and business users. Gerry Gwen Conde, Leyeco 2 legal officer, said the increase would only be imposed in the city, where it has 79.79 percent of its 42,672 consumers, as it was the only local government in its service area that demanded the franchise tax. The firm also serves Palo and Babatngon towns. *Joey Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau*

VIZCAYA COPPER, GOLD SITE

Firm buying tribe land in mining area

By Melvin Gascon
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—An official of a foreign mining firm has admitted that his company has been buying land in an ore-rich village in Kasibu town, site of its proposed large-scale gold-copper project.

Arnel Arrojo, project manager of the Dinkidi gold-copper venture of Climax Arimco Mining Corp. (CAMC), said they bought farmlands in Barangay Didipio in Kasibu using the Mamparang Foundation Inc. (MFI), a group reportedly composed of Didipio villagers supporting mining.

"Mamparang Foundation was an instrument that allowed Climax-Arimco to buy the lands, as the company, being 100-percent foreign-owned, is not allowed under our laws to buy lands in the country," he said.

CAMC is an Australian firm that is trying to conduct mining operations for gold and copper in Didipio, located at the heart of the Mamparang mountain range near the Nueva Vizcaya-Quirino border.

The $102-million project aims to process about 4 million ounces of gold and 1.5 billion ounces of copper deposits underneath Dinkidi Hill in Sitio Bacbacan, in 14 years.

Arrojo said the foundation would also be tasked by CAMC with implementing its rehabilitation program at the end of the company's mining operation.

According to its Dinkidi development plan, the company will need 325 hectares for its project area to accommodate various plant facilities, an earth stockpile and a tailings dam.

Arrojo declined to reveal the total land area that has been bought by the company through the MFI.

But lawyer Desiderio Perez, provincial executive assistant, said his office has helped more than 10 Didipio residents who have sold occupational rights over their lands.

While occupants do not have titles over their property, the foundation has recognized the title that the residents acquired through tax declarations.

"I was asked by [Gov. Luisa Cuaresma] to look into these land acquisition deals in order to help the Didipio people and be assured that they would not be shortchanged in the transactions," he said.

According to Perez, the foundation has been acquiring ricelands at P80,000 a hectare, while citrus plantations and vegetable farms are valued at a slightly higher rate.

He said, however, the company has yet to clarify its program of relocation for the residents who may be ejected from their lands after the foundation acquires the property.

"The company has stated that it would no longer be actually interested in the lands after the mining operation. But it has to be made clear whether these lands will be awarded back to their original owners, or where they would be relocated after they are made to leave their lands," Perez said.

CEBU iCT 2005
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  Kiran Karnik, President, NASSCOM
Where Will You Be Tomorrow? A Roadmap for Innovation
  Matt Thompson, Director, Technology Outreach and Open Source Programs Office Sun Microsystems
Development of a Robust Software Industry
  Regional Speaker from Microsoft
Evolving an IT & ITES Industry Development Model
  Datuk Dr. Mohamed Arif Nun, CEO, Multimedia Development Corporation
Next Generation Networks and Their Impact on the IT and ITES Industry
  Tan Seow Nguan, Director for Network Planning, Singapore Telecom
Best Practices for Securing an Enterprise Environment for SMEs and Big Business
  Regional Speaker from Oracle
ICT in Basic Education: Developing Human Capital at the Foundational Level
  Luli Arroyo, Director for Strategic Development, FIT-ED
Role of Venture Financing in IT & ITES Industry Development
  Paco Sandejas, Managing Partner, Narra Venture Capital

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GMA to keep hands off in picking bet for ARMM gov

COTABATO CITY—Gov. Parouk Hussin of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is seeking reelection.

Hussin's move came as the Lakas-CMD planned to declare a "free-zone" for party members who would run against each other.

A source in the party said President Macapagal-Arroyo might no longer name the party standard bearer in the ARMM elections.

The President formed a committee to select the party standard bearer in the Aug. 8 regional elections. Mayor Zaldy Ampatuan of Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao, was at the top of the committee's list of possible administration candidates.

Hussin, in a statement, said he decided to seek reelection on the prodding of foreign donor countries and members of the powerful Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Hussin, a Lakas member, excluded himself from the selection committee.

Lawyer Renato Magbutay, Comission on Elections director for ARMM, said at least six known Muslim political leaders have filed their certificates of candidacy.

They are ARMM assemblyman Hatimil Hassan, who chairs the Moro National Liberation Front, House deputy speaker Gerry Salapuddin, Mayor Ampatuan, Alvares Isnaji of Jolo, former ARMM Vice Gov. Mahid Mutilan and former lawmaker Guimid Matalam, the official opposition candidate.

Hussin is yet to file his candidacy.

Magbutay said the Comelec is expecting more gubernatorial candidates to file their certificates until May 6, the last day for the filing of candidacy.

The source said the President may no longer anoint her choice but would give equal opportunities to party members who aspire for the top post in the ARMM. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

BORACAY LAND DISPUTE

Tribe commission stops eviction of Ati

AN ATI girl harvests beans in an area away from the commercialized beach of Boracay. The Ati community is facing dislocation from their village in the famous resort island. MITCH MAURICIO

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) has issued a writ of preliminary injunction against the eviction of the Ati families from their village on Boracay Island in Aklan.

In a three-page order dated April 29, NCIP regional hearing officer Sulpicio Gamosa ordered holders of tax declarations, claiming ownership of the lands that the Atis occupy, to desist from acts "tantamount to the summary eviction" of the indigenous group.

Gamosa said in his order that the preliminary injunction is effective until the petition for the issuance of a certificate of ancestral domain title (CADT) filed by the Atis is resolved or a "just and equitable compromise agreement/settlement of this case is accepted by the community" and with his approval.

The lawyer earlier issued a TRO with the same provision in relation to the petition for the issuance of a preliminary injunction against the claimants.

Basis

Gamosa cited the testimony of Dr. Alicia Magos, an anthropologist at the University of the Philippines in the Visayas, as among the basis of his order.

Magos, who conducted an investigation on April 12 and 13 in a site in Yapak Village in Boracay, said that based on her initial assessment, an old burial ground of the Atis exists in the area.

This, she told the NCIP, suggests that the Atis have been on the island at least since the early 19th century.

"Old burial grounds are one of the tangible proofs of time immemorial possession of an indigenous cultural community/indigenous peoples over the area," said Gamosa in his order.

He said the writ of preliminary injunction was also issued because the Atis and the claimants have still not reached an agreement or settlement to be approved by the NCIP.

Original inhabitants

The Atis have a pending application for the issuance of a CADT claiming they are the original inhabitants of the 1,032-hectare island-resort.

But they have been threatened with eviction from the one-hectare land they are occupying in Sitio Bolabog in Balabag Village at the northern end of the island.

The Ati village sits on adjacent properties of Aniceto Yap, brother of Aklan provincial member Jose Yap, and the family of Aklan Rep. Florencio Miraflores.

Caretakers of the claimants have erected concrete and barbed wire fences that have divided the community into two and restricted the movement of the Atis.

Relocation

During her visit to the island on April 15, President Macapagal-Arroyo told Ati leaders that their community will be relocated to a one-hectare property within the 80-hectare Eco-Tourism Village on the island.

The P50-million relocation site will be donated by the Taytay sa Kauswagan Inc. (TKI) and the Boracay Property Holdings Inc.

The fight for land in Boracay, famous worldwide for its white-sand beaches, stepped up following moves by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to allow the titling of pieces of property on the island.

Titling of lands has been prohibited by a decree issued by the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos.

Bishop bans Masons from entering church in Mati

By Ferdinand Zuasola
PDI Mindanao Bureau

MATI, Davao Oriental—Bishop Patricio Alo asked Catholics who are members of the Freemasonry to stay out of the church.

"We would like to inform our Freemason brothers and sisters that you are no longer allowed to enter the church because your group contradicts the teachings of the Catholic Church," Bishop Alo said in a pastoral message read during Masses here.

Fr. Medardo Salomia, spiritual director of the Diocese of Mati, said Bishop Alo and majority of the priests in the province have also agreed not to give the Holy Communion to Catholics who are members of the Freemasonry.

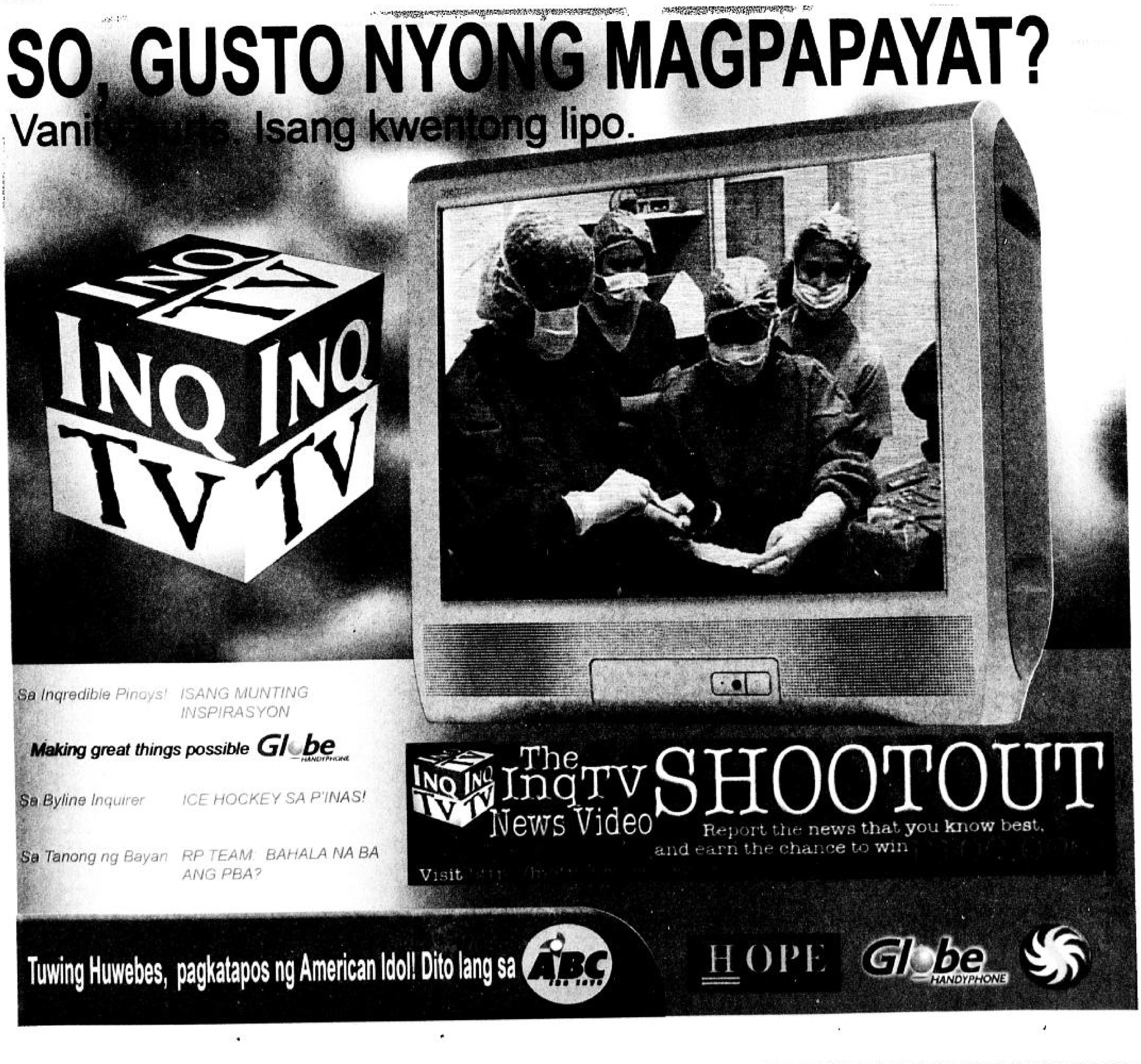
"The reason given why they are being barred from taking the Holy Communion was that they are being anti-Christ," Father Salomia said.

Salomia said he and several priests urged Bishop Alo and those supporting the ban against Freemasons "to reconsider their decision and to restudy this group."

"I have interviewed many Freemason Catholics here and they all said that there was no truth to allegation that their society is anti-Christ," Salomia said.

Former Davao Oriental Vice Gov. Cirilo Valles, a leader of the Freemasons here, said they were "very shocked" and "so disappointed."

"These people are close-minded, so unchristian," Valles said.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Employers open to ₱30 wage hike

From page A1

the INQUIRER supported the President's order for an increase in the minimum wage to enable the masses to cope with the rising cost of goods and services.

Francis Chua, president of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce Inc., said that while not all businesses could afford the wage increase, "it is about time that businessmen consider seriously the hardship of their workers and help them cope with the high cost of living."

Sergio Ortiz-Luis, Philippine Exporters Confederation president, said Ms Arroyo's initiative to provide relief to workers was timely considering that most Filipinos could not cope with the surging prices.

"We don't think it's interference on her part. She [the President] has the right to use moral suasion in this case," Ortiz Luis said.

Pathetic

In the House of Representatives, Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo was unhappy with Ms Arroyo's order to regional wage boards to increase the minimum wage by the end of the month.

He described the order as "pathetic and destabilizing."

Ocampo said the President's order would not quell increasing labor unrest because wage boards had historically recommended "pitifully low" wage increases.

"She is really asking for it. She never fails to ram policies like very low wage rates and very high labor flexibility into the throats of the poor. That is why the people's dissatisfaction runs deeper than ever," Ocampo said.

He urged Congress to pass a P125 across-the-board wage increase.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles, however, said that if a wage increase was legislated, it would be lower than the P125.

Bayan Muna and its allied militant party-list groups, Anakpawis and Gabriela, have been pushing for a legislated P125 across-the-board daily wage increase since 2001.

Besides a P125 increase in the minimum wage, House Bill No. 345 seeks a salary increase of P3,000 a month for all government workers.

Balance

Administration lawmakers lauded the President's order.

Representatives Ernesto "Bansai" Nieva (LP, Manila) and Marcelino Libanan (Lakas, Eastern Samar) said that contrary to claims by the President's critics, the government "recognized the fact that the present minimum wage must be adjusted to reflect the higher cost of living."

Nieva said the President acted on the workers' pleas for a wage adjustment but took into consideration the capability of employers to comply with the increase.

"The President's decision setting a time frame for the wage hike is the best way to give relief while protecting business and job opportunities," he said.

Libanan warned that a big wage increase could spell doom for the economy.

Unemployed

"The President's decision was timely, necessary and lawful. She had to balance the interest of our workers and the effect of a wage hike on present jobs. A wage hike will be useless if businesses will shut down," he said.

During the hearings for the proposed P125 wage increase in January, the Department of Labor and Employment and the NWPC said workers' woes would be better alleviated by bringing down the cost of living through price monitoring and jobs creation.

The department and the NWPC cited projections by the National Economic and Development Authority that the P125 increase, if approved, would increase the number of unemployed this year by 2.56 million and raise the inflation rate to 13.4 percent from 5.5 percent last year.

The DOLE yesterday said it would hold a series of public hearings on how much the wage adjustment would be for workers.

Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas urged all interested parties to attend the hearings.

"Anyone in the community can attend," she said in a radio interview. She said the amount of adjustment would vary for each region and should take effect on or before June 1.

Sto. Tomas, however, could not say how much of an increase the workers could hope for, or what the range of such an increase would be, in regions such as Metro Manila or Central Visayas.

The labor chief said the amount would depend on the outcome of the hearings. Both the labor and employers' groups, as well as economic planners, would be consulted before any final recommendation is made, she said.

Also, some of the wage boards may finish ahead of the President's deadline and announce the adjustments before the month ends, Sto. Tomas said. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

Doña Mary's 100th: 'A wonderful feeling'

From page A1

More photos showed Doña Mary with show biz luminaries, among them her son's best friend Fernando Poe Jr., who passed away last December. Poe's widow, Susan Roces, was among Doña Mary's more than 800 guests.

Deposed President Joseph Estrada was allowed out of house arrest to attend his mother's party.

Estrada was whisked to the historic Manila Hotel shortly after 3:30 p.m., to join family and friends in greeting his ailing mother amid tight security and allegations of a coup plot against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Escorted by a convoy of 12 vehicles, Estrada, in *barong* Tagalog and black pants, alighted from a silver Toyota Altis accompanied by his son, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada. Estrada's wife, Sen. Loi Ejercito, looking pretty in a pink *baro't saya* (Filipiniana dress), was there, too.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION! Just like the old days in the movies, all cameras are on former President Joseph Estrada upon his arrival at the Manila Hotel to celebrate the 100th birthday of his mother Doña Mary.

REM ZAMORA

No supporters in sight

Only mediamen mobbed Estrada and not a single placard-bearing supporter was in sight to greet the former President.

"We are not preventing his supporters and well-wishers from welcoming (Estrada) as long as they do not cause any trouble," Senior Supt. Danilo Abarzosa, Western Police District deputy director for operations, said in an interview.

But the police official noted that there were no reports of assemblies by Estrada supporters in any part of the city.

Abarzosa said they deployed only 50 policemen to ensure security around the hotel premises.

Erap, Cinderella

In a speech delivered at 7:30 p.m., Estrada said his mother was his inspiration and strength for all the challenges he is facing right now.

He expressed confidence that the multimillion-peso plunder case against him would be dismissed and he vowed to redeem the family honor.

"*Ipinapangako ko sa iyo, Mama, lilinisin ko ang maganda nating pangalan. Sa* next birthday *mo, Mama, nandito na ako, malaya para magdiwang ng walang* deadline, *walang* time limit. *Mahirap yung* may deadline *pala. Para akong si* Cinderella (Mother, I promise to redeem our good name. On your next birthday, I will be free to celebrate with you without a deadline, without a time limit. Being given a deadline is hard; I feel like Cinderella)," Estrada said.

More popular than GMA

In his speech, Estrada noted that although he was only taking care of ducks at his rest house in Tanay, Rizal, where he is detained, his popularity rating was much higher than the current President's.

A survey released last month by the Social Weather Stations said 44 percent of Filipinos still had much trust in Estrada despite the massive corruption charges he is facing in court.

Later, Estrada serenaded his mother with a song he had composed himself titled "Kahit na Magtiis."

Guest list

Some 800 guests came to attend Doña Mary's birthday bash.

The guest list included big names from politics and government, namely, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Rep. Imee Marcos, former Sen. Ernesto Maceda, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, former Sen. Kit Tatad, Ben Diokno, Sonny Escudero and his son Rep. Francis, former Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen, Rod Reyes, Jose Pardo, Sen. Alfredo Lim, Eva Estrada Kalaw, Bienvenido Laguesma, Vicente Rivera, Gregorio Vigilar and retired Justice Santiago Kapunan.

Opposition Senators Panfilo Lacson and Edgardo Angara were conspicuously absent as were luminaries from Makati-based businesses, like the Ayalas.

Show biz stars sighted were Susan Roces, Dolphy, Eddie Garcia, Eric Quizon, Rudy Fernandez, Richard Gomez, Pete and Boots Anson-Roa, Rez and Candy Cortez and Espiridion Laxa.

Instead of gifts, guests were requested to share their blessings with the indigent patients at the San Juan Medical Center ward, the Scholarship for Seminarians and toward the renovation of the chapel in Kawag, Subic, Zambales.

Stellar menu

Guests enjoyed a menu which consisted of Timbale of roast eggplant and prawns on tomato coriander vinaigrette, chicken and corn soup with kani, canneloni with spinach stuffing cheese sauce, guyabano sherbet, grilled US beef tenderloin on mushroom sauce with buttered Tagaytay vegetables and parsley potato, and for dessert, baked Alaska.

The celebration started at 5 p.m. with a concelebrated Mass officiated by Bishop Teodoro Bacani and assisted by Fathers Sonny Ramirez and Larry Faraon.

This was followed by a program hosted by Boots Anson-Roa, Eric Quizon and Ariel Ureta.

Doña Mary's eldest daughter, Pilarica, representing 147 members of the Ejercito clan, gave a tribute to the matriarch, followed by a video featuring highlights of her life. *With AFP*

Rival politicos heed call for unity meet

From page A1

ple who happen to be poor."

Gov't destabilizing itself

He said the ones guilty of destabilization were actually those in government.

"By their own doing or their failure to do their jobs, they foment destabilization talks. The solution lies in their hands," said the Sorsogon representative.

Specifically, he said, there was no reason for Congress to continue blocking plenary debates on House Bill No. 345 sponsored by Mariano and other party-list representatives seeking a P125 wage hike.

Mariano said: "We are open to unite with progressive forces but we will never allow ourselves to be used to perpetuate a government that does not serve and protect the interest of the people, like the politically isolated Arroyo administration."

De Venecia called for a meeting of the standing committee of political parties in Congress to condemn the "recurring coup attempts and to move the country forward to constitutional amendments."

De Venecia said Senate President Franklin Drilon and Angara would also attend.

'GMA needs no saving'

The Speaker suggested that the meeting should also discuss wages, the prices of basic goods and the wisdom of imposing additional taxes.

Sen. Richard Gordon called the INQUIRER to say that Ms Arroyo "doesn't need saving."

"It's always this case ... We have a lot of people who don't love our country [and] openly call for replacement of elective officials. It's a very poor precedent and speaks badly of our maturity as a nation," said Gordon.

Gordon was referring to calls last weekend from former Defense Secretary Fortunato Abat for the establishment of a revolutionary government to replace Ms Arroyo.

A drifting people

Angara, chair of the opposition Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, said convening the meeting proposed by De Venecia would allow leaders to set directions for a "drifting people" and quash coup rumors.

"Unless political leaders point the way, we will be directionless," he said in a phone interview, stressing that the meeting should draw up concrete plans "of what we should do for the country."

"It's a good move because if there's no direction, people like General Abat will be suggesting extrajudicial means," Angara said. "Political leaders have to prove that our current system of government, though defective, is still capable of reforms."

Skeptical Manny

Sen. Manuel Villar, chair of the Nacionalista Party, was skeptical that the meeting would bring the desired results. He pointed out that political parties were only a part of a broad spectrum of society.

"I don't think it will be a big help. Political parties are just one sector ... We can't limit the discussion among ourselves," Villar said.

Besides, he said, it would be useless to attend it because even before the meeting could start, De Venecia had "concluded" that the country should move forward to constitutional amendments.

"The political parties should talk about what's good for the country and report the results to the public. I've no problem with that. But if we will just go there to affirm his conclusion, I see a problem there."

De Venecia had said he would convene the multi-party meeting to unify the country behind its "duly elected government."

Reaching out

He said the meeting would also discuss the approval of needed revenue measures, peace agreements with insurgents and constitutional reform.

Angara said political leaders should focus on drawing up plans to address the country's political problems after the approval of the value-added tax measure.

"Once we get the VAT law out of the way, we can look into the political plans," he said.

Ms Arroyo welcomed the De Venecia initiative.

"Speaker De Venecia has always been the advocate of a win-win solution. So we appreciate all his efforts," she said at a news conference.

Asked if the meeting could be a step towards the administration reaching out to the opposition, Ms Arroyo said: "Reaching out is always helpful.

"[Reconciliation] is very well within our policy," she stressed. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

Reds see 'unity meet' as JDV empty talk

LUCENA CITY—Communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal dismissed Speaker Jose de Venecia's call for a unity meeting among political parties as nothing but empty talk.

"He's fond of calling for a summit on almost all kinds of issues but afterward, nothing happens to most of them," Rosal said in a mobile phone interview. "De Venecia is all talk but short of action."

Rosal said peace negotiations between the Arroyo administration and the communist-led National Democratic Front had failed to achieve their goal.

"There is no more to salvage from the peace talks. It was cut short, although informally, by the intransigence of Ms Macapagal-Arroyo [who wants] the capitulation of the whole revolutionary movement," he said.

"That [De Venecia] summit is bound to fail just like the previous meetings that were initiated by De Venecia. It's all empty talk," the communist leader said. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

3 bishops join . . .

From page A1

ready expressed reservations over issues such as new tax measures.

"But it seems there's no letup. That's why in the last few days, there have been expressions of discontent," he said.

"We call on the Filipino people to come out and fight for our economic and political freedom," his group said.

"We can no longer suffer in silence and grit out teeth in pain. We have to fight for our children's right to a peaceful, humane and economically stable life."

Last month, Dagupan-Lingayen Archbishop Oscar Cruz warned of a people's revolt.

Curse

Cruz, a former CBCP president, said government officials had become a curse instead of a blessing to the people.

The President can easily be removed when the people become totally fed up with the way things are going, Cruz said.

While claiming it had "nothing to do" with former Defense Secretary Fortunato Abat, the KME said it had been approached by different political organizations and personalities to spearhead efforts to change the government.

"If we get successful in putting up a [new] government that will bring [about] these changes, we will act only as watchdogs," KME chair Jimmy Regalario said in a press conference.

New Constitution

Abat earlier demanded the ouster of Ms Arroyo and the abolition of Congress, while calling for the establishment of a revolutionary government that would draft a new Constitution.

The KME was cautious about associating itself with politicians, including supporters of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

Regalario, an economist, said the planned Independence Day protest would gather some opposition groups but only as a "broad coalition of unity."

"We will not be a party to those who simply want to be in power," said Regalario, formerly head of the consultancy firms Unisearch and Resources for Economic Development Studies. "Definitely, we know who they are," he said.

Emma Roxas, a member of the KME representing the academe, said her group was not supporting "any private or political person."

"We are our own people," Roxas, a sociology professor at the University of Sto. Tomas, told reporters.

"Our conviction will be our direction," Regalario maintained. "We will not compromise with other directions."

Foreign interests

But for Regalario and his group, the President would be spared another enemy, referring to the KME, if only she would abandon "an economic system whose topmost priority is to serve foreign interests."

The group called for the repeal of the Oil Deregulation Law and the immediate rollback of fuel prices and of toll, power and water rates. It also wants the administration to stop imposing additional taxes.

"We have consistently demanded a reversal of economic policies since 1994 to prevent this inevitable sad state of our economy," it said in a statement.

"Instead of heeding our call for change, the [Arroyo] administration is now embarking on a terrorist policy against her own people in conjunction with the US-led 'war on terror,'" the KME said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Rightists' hand seen in bomb try

By Luige A. del Puerto

IT WAS not the Abu Sayyaf but rightist groups which attempted to bomb the interior department building in Quezon City on Sunday, according to the police's top official yesterday.

But Director General Arturo Lomibao, chief of the Philippine National Police, did not identify which "rightist group" placed the bomb in front of the Francisco Gold Condominium on Edsa around 11 p.m. Sunday, except to say that they were trying to trace its make.

What was certain was that the bomb, which contained one-fourths pound of TNT, was not assembled by extremist groups such as the Abu Sayyaf, Lomibao said, quoting bomb experts.

For one, he said, the bomb was not intended to harm anyone. "It was placed there late in the evening, so there were no people there at the time," he said. "The target was the bomb center, and it was meant to explode five minutes after it was left there."

The bomb consisted of an alarm clock and four sticks of Magnum 365, a commercially available explosive gel mixed with about 110 grams of the high explosive trinitrotoluene or TNT.

Deputy Director General Avelino Razon Jr. said it would have been powerful, but not enough to tear down the building.

Security guard Mariano Natividad, 47, said he saw a man, who had just gotten off a bus, leave a plastic bag on a patch of grass in front of the building. The man then made a phone call, prompting him to check the bag. When he saw the alarm clock, Natividad immediately called the police, who disabled the bomb.

The attempt to bomb the DILG building followed calls to unseat President Macapagal-Arroyo.

One-stop shop

Meanwhile, the National Police Commission (Napolcom) has created a centralized bomb information data bank for the police force, a one-stop shop for case files of local and international bombing incidents.

The PNP Bomb Data Center would serve as a division of the Directorate for Operations at the PNP national headquarters.

"It is the prime duty and responsibility of our police force to ensure the safety and security of citizens against all forms of criminality, and provide the country with protection against threats of terrorism," said Napolcom vice chair and executive officer Imelda Roces, in a statement.

Custodian

The Bomb Data Center would serve as a library of information and intelligence on previous bombing incidents, data on known terror groups and their modus operandi, profiles and a photo gallery of convicted and suspected bombers from here and abroad, and evidence collated against them.

The data center shall also keep evidence gathered in scenes of blasts, post-blast and investigation reports, and technical data on the assembly and safe handling of different kinds of explosives.

As a custodian, the bomb center shall also keep an inventory of confiscated or discovered explosives, and monitor their disposal.

With Tarra V. Quismundo

3 nabbed in May 1 fray out

By DJ Yap

THREE workers arrested after the Labor Day scuffle on Sunday between police and protesters at the Mabuhay Rotunda on the boundary of Manila and Quezon City have been released.

William Flores, 21, and Joseph Idago, 23, were discharged yesterday morning from Camp Karingal after a Quezon City fiscal recommended their case for further investigation.

Romy Guanzon, on the other hand, was released on the late afternoon of May 1, after police agreed to let him go, said Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino secretary general Leody de Guzman.

Flores and Idago, both Quezon City residents, were charged with direct assault upon an agent or person of authority for allegedly resisting two antiriot policemen who arrested them.

The two were among a group of protesters who had massed up at España Street after police had barricaded the lane going toward Manila.

Demonstrators managed to march about 50 feet before police turned them back, resulting in a brief altercation. Five protesters, including two unidentified women, and two policemen were hurt in the incident.

PO2 David Talosig and PO1 Roosevelt Guevarra accused Flores and Idago of hitting them. Medico-legal certificates showed that Talosig, Guevarra and Flores were also hurt in the scuffle.

JOAN BONDOC

KEEPING COOL

Far from the lure of air-conditioned malls and upscale fun palaces, these children spend an afternoon at the UP Lagoon in Diliman, Quezon City.

MMDA still without 2005 budget

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) has yet to get approval for its 2005 budget from Metro Manila mayors five months into the year.

Given the tense atmosphere between the two sides, prospects for approval anytime soon do not seem very bright.

The Metro Manila Council (MMC), the agency's decision-making arm composed of the metropolitan area's 17 mayors, approves the MMDA's budget.

The MMDA has a P2.37-billion proposed budget this year.

The amount includes the agency's operational expenses and appropriations for road improvement, flood control and traffic management projects, among others.

MMDA general manager Robert Nacianceno shrugged off the delay, saying, "We can always operate on a reenacted budget."

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay has floated the idea of setting aside altogether the MMDA's budget, saying a recent Supreme Court decision rendered the agency virtually powerless.

The Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling barring the MMDA from confiscating licenses, though the high court said the case was moot as the agency had long stopped the practice.

Binay and other mayors saw the resolution as a defeat for the agency.

He said it validated his belief that the MMDA was just a "coordinating body" for Metro Manila's traffic management.

The MMC earlier asked for the deferment of the budget discussion.

1 dead in Caloocan duel

By Nancy C. Carvajal

A CALOOCAN City government employee proved to be a better gun fighter in a duel which left his opponent dead.

Godofredo Gamboa, of the city's department of public safety and traffic management, and Rogelio Moral, had drawn their guns in preparation for a gun fight last Saturday evening along Uyguangco Street, Barangay Tala, a police official said. "We are still investigating the reason for the fight," he added.

Moral was declared dead on arrival at the hospital from a lone gunshot wound on the back. Gamboa, on the other hand, is now confined at the hospital, but refused to be interviewed, police said. A .38-cal. revolver with a defaced serial number, and a .45-cal. hand gun were found at the scene of the incident.

METROBRIEFS

Meningo case on way to recovery

A SIX-MONTH-OLD child with meningococcemia is now on the way to recovery at the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM). The child, who comes from Putatan, Muntinlupa, had been confined at the RITM last week. As a precautionary move, all those who were in contact with the patient, including the staff of two hospitals, were given medicines and asked to disinfect their facilities. A fever surveillance team was also set up in Putatan to monitor possible cases. The child was first brought to a San Pedro, Laguna, hospital for treatment. The following day, the parents took the child to a faith healer. When the patient's fever did not subside, the child was brought to a Muntinlupa hospital, and later transferred to the RITM. *Fran Katigbak*

St. Paul book launch tomorrow

THE BOOK "Bread for the World: 100 Years of Life and Mission 1904-2004, Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres Philippine Province" will be launched tomorrow, 5:30 p.m. at the preschool building of St. Paul Pasig City. Published by the sisters of St. Paul of Chartres, the book is written by Sr. Flordeliza C. Deza and Francisca C. Quitoriano. Copies can be ordered at St. Paul University on Gilmore Avenue, Quezon City; SPU Manila in Pedro Gil, Malate, and Our Lady of Chartres Convent, Antipolo City. Or contact Sr. Carmelita Chua, tel. no. 524-5687 or fax 525-6469; Sr. Fe Villanueva, 726-7986, fax 722-1865, or Sr. Lirio Gavan or Sr. Remedios Sandalo, 658-7805/658-7506 or fax 658-9552/685-7510.

Free cough clinic in Sta. Mesa

MOTHERS flock with their children to the Solmux free clinic manned by Dr. Jaime Lumiqued at the Domingo Santiago Day Care Center in a depressed area in Sta. Mesa, Sampaloc. The clinic is one of 100 free clinics and medical missions being conducted by United Laboratories Consumer Health Division in poor barangays across the country, and is sponsored by Solmux, a widely-prescribed Unilab cough medicine. Free consultation and projects like this help less-privileged Filipino families offset the high cost of medical and health care.

Model markets get ₱500,000 each

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FIVE public and five private markets are receiving P500,000 each from the Department of Agriculture for being "Huwarang Palengke (Model Markets)."

Apart from relatively lower prices for basic commodities, the winners were also found to be clean, orderly and honest—that is, their prices are fair and their weighing scales are correct.

Three of the markets are in Marikina City, where the awarding was held yesterday though the winners were announced three months ago.

"This award will attract more people to come to these markets. If markets are strengthened, this will also help the economies of their local government units," Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said.

The awarding ceremony was held at the Marikina Public Market in Barangay Sta. Elena, one of the winners.

Market association president Florencio Macatangay told the INQUIRER, "We clean our wet section three times a week. We also spray insecticides regularly."

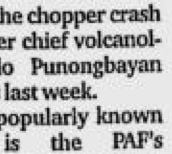
The market, which has more than 1,000 stalls, used to be an eyesore, he said. It was renovated in 1993 when Metropolitan Manila Development Authority chair Bayani Fernando was mayor. "All our vendors have identification cards to protect our customers," Macatangay added. Garbage is collected every afternoon. Vendors put their garbage inside plastic bags.

President Macapagal-Arroyo presented the checks during ceremonies attended by local officials and vendors. Marikina City Mayor Marides Fernando received the award for Marikina Public Market, Concepcion Market in Barangay Bayan-Bayanan, and the People's Market in Barangay Concepcion I. Muntinlupa City Mayor Jaime Fresnedi accepted the award for the Pamilihan ng Lungsod ng Muntinlupa. Other winners were Dagohoy Market, Manila; Mutya ng Pasig Market, Pasig City; Polo Public Market, Valenzuela City; Clara Market, Parañaque City, and Farmer's and Muñoz Markets, Quezon City.

PNP should not mind Abat

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo



THE PHILIPPINE National Police was reportedly set to file sedition charges against former Defense Secretary Fortunato Abat. Abat last week called for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo and the abolition of Congress through a "people power" uprising.

The PNP should attend to more pressing matters than pay heed to the rantings and ravings of a garrulous old man.

Nobody paid attention to Abat at Club Filipino in Greenhills, so why should the PNP pay attention to him?

* * *

A coup didn't take place on May 1, Labor Day. Neither was there a "people power" uprising as was bruited about by very noisy groups.

That's because when talk of a *coup d'etat* or people power revolt is loud, it doesn't take place.

Shallow water in the river makes noise; still waters run deep.

* * *

GMA went to market in Cebu City during the day that an oust-Gloria event was supposed to take place.

Would the Presidential Security Group (PSG), under Brig. Gen. Delfin Bangit, have allowed the President to move around if it was sure that a coup or people power uprising was to take place?

* * *

All UH-1H helicopters of the Philippine Air Force have been grounded after the chopper crash that killed former chief volcanologist Raymundo Punongbayan and eight others last week.

The UH-1H, popularly known as "Huey," is the PAF's workhorse. It's an all-around aircraft. It's used for ferrying troops to battle sites, medical mercy missions and plucking people from rooftops during floods.

There used to be so many Hueys that every Army brigade and regional commands of the defunct Philippine Constabulary had at least two. That's not counting the numerous Hueys in Air Force camps and small units.

But alas, reports say there are only 50 Hueys still operational! Methinks the figure is bloated because many of the Hueys are sources of "cannibalized" helicopter parts for those still flying. An Air Force officer told me that about 30 Hueys were operational. The other 20 provided spare parts for the flying ones.

Had we not driven the Americans from Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base, we would still have all the Hueys we want.

The Americans' anger at being driven out of their bases in the country has subsided. During the President's trip to the United States two years ago, President Bush promised to give us Hueys and C-130 aircraft.

But Angelo de la Cruz came into the picture. The country withdrew its troops from Iraq in exchange for the life of De la Cruz who was being held hostage by Iraqi militants.

As a result, the US government has cut back its military aid to the Philippines. Yes, Hueys and C-130 aircraft would still be sent to the country. But they're not as numerous as what Bush promised Gloria when she visited Washington two years ago.

* * *

The government has lost a sincere, honest and good man in retired Brig. Gen. Victor Corpus.

Corpus resigned last week from his post as the country's forest and mining czar.

Victor, who is my mistah (I'm an adopted member of Philippine Military Academy Class of 1967, to which he belongs), has refused to talk about his resignation.

But the business community definitely knows why this decent man left the government.

E-mail: pr_sports@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres
Text us your feedback: Inquirer sprt name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

TENNIS: ATP Telecom Master Italia; 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 11 p.m.; STAR Sports – Check out first round claycourt action from Italy.

BASKETBALL: NBA Playoffs – Bulls vs Wizards, Game 4; 7:30 a.m.; Spurs vs Nuggets, Game 4, First Round; 10:30 a.m.; Solar Sports.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Don't touch coach Zamar, warns BAP official

By Musong R. Castillo

THE BASKETBALL committee created by the local Olympic body can tinker with any aspect of the national team—from the players even to the utility personnel.

But leave the coaching staff alone.

Filomeno "Boy" Codiñera Jr., the vice president for the Visayas of the Basketball Association of the Philippines, said he would go to the world basketball federation, Fiba, if Boysie Zamar is not allowed to call the shots for the RP Team that will play in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association (Seaba) tournament in July.

"I'm warning anyone, and I mean anyone: Don't touch the coaching staff," Codiñera told the INQUIRER over the phone. "Don't force us to take this matter to the Fiba because what they are doing is tantamount to intervention."

Codiñera said the BAP board had specifically named Zamar head coach of the RP-Cebuana Lhuillier squad to the Seaba in a resolution approved during the association's general assembly meeting two months ago in Dumaguete.

The former baseball icon and father of three Philippine Basketball Association players said he welcomed the PBA and the PBL's help as far as reinforcing the team is concerned—but with certain limitations.

Chot Reyes, coach of the PBA selection that will play in the Asian championship in Qatar this September, said on Sunday that he might end up coaching the Seaba team.

"Right now, we're working on the premise that I'll be the one coaching for Seaba," Reyes said. "[Jose] Peping Cojuangco, president of the Philippine Olympic Committee], made it very clear that he would prefer that I handle the team so I have to respect that decision.

Zamar's fate was left in the hands of Reyes after Cojuangco effectively disbanded the RP-Cebuana Lhuillier team last April 25 by asking the PBA and PBL to reinforce the national team with their best players.

DON'T TOUCH/ A22

ZAMAR

Welcoat seeks share of lead vs Magnolia

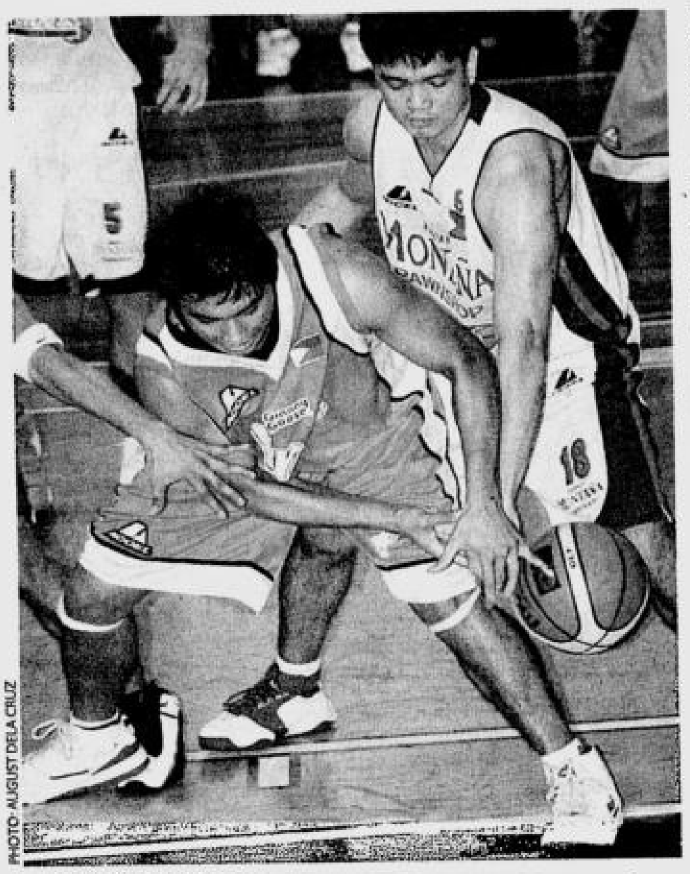


PHOTO: AUGUST DELA CRUZ

NESTOR David of Granny Goose loses possession off Paul Guerrero of Montaña during their game Saturday. The Kornets upset the Jewels, 71-67.

WELCOAT Paints guns for a piece of the lead and a chance to get even when it collides with Magnolia Dairy Ice Cream today in a rematch of last year's finals in the 2005 PBL Unity Cup at the Pasig Sports Center.

The Paint Masters, the losing finalists in the last three conferences, hope to match the standing of solo leader Montana Pawnshop at 6-1 in the 4 p.m. game.

Toyota Otis-Letran, tied with Magnolia at 3-3, clash with winless Negros Navigation-San Beda in the 2 p.m. opener.

The Knights and Red Lions are among the heavyweights in the coming NCAA season and today's showdown is a preview of how the collegiate squads are shaping up.

The Knights are slight favorites, however, following their 85-79 win over Granny Goose last Thursday. The win came after they bowed twice in a row from endgame collapses.

Toyota Otis coach Louie Alas said they have gained some momentum in their bid to win their last five games to grab an outright semis slots.

Paolo Orbeta is expected to reprise his impressive performance last week when he keyed the Paint Masters' 81-78 victory over star-studded Harbour Centre, 81-78.

Aside from the 5-foot-10 Orbeta, coach Caloy Garcia can count on Fil-American Anthony Washington, who produced double-double performances in the team's last two games.

"He's quietly delivering for us," said Garcia. "If he can dish out the same level of energy, we have good chances of beating the Wizards."

Welcoat is also banking on Jay Coching, Erwin Sta. Maria, Leo Najorda and veteran Marvin Ortiguerra for additional firepower.

Arwind Santos, on the other hand, will be the main man for Magnolia aside from support guys like Cesar Catli, Neil Reneses, Mark Isip, Gerard Jones and Denok Miranda. *Marc Anthony Reyes*

STANDINGS

Montana	6 1
Welcoat	5 1
Harbour	5 2
Magnolia	3 3
Toyota Otis	3 3
Granny G.	3 4
Bacchus	1 6
Nenaco	0 6

GAMES TODAY
(Pasig Sports Center)
2 p.m.—Toyota Otis-Letran vs Nenaco-SBC
4 p.m.—Welcoat Paints vs Magnolia Ice Cream

Ozamiz five nips Valencia in thriller

VALENCIA, Bukidnon—Veteran Christian Nicdao scored in the last 7.8 seconds to seal Ozamiz Cotta's 77-74 victory over expansion team Valencia Golden Harvest last Sunday in the 2005 Panasonic-NBC national basketball championship at the packed Valencia gym here.

Ozamiz was ahead, 75-74, when the 6-foot-5 Nicdao, who played for Laguna Spring in last year's NBC tournament, grabbed the loose ball to score and spell doom for Mayor Jose Galario Jr.'s Golden Harvest.

"Valencia played an inspired game but we're lucky that the breaks went our way," said Ozamiz coach Albert Calvo.

Nicdao finished with 15 points, 22 rebounds, four blocks, four steals and one assist.

Action in the tourney supported by Panasonic, Accel, Molten, Spring Cooking Oil, Sulpicio Lines, Cebu Pacific, Philtranco, Sunbolt Sports Drink, Nature's Spring, Far Eastern Insurance, Skygo Motorcycles, Sirlitz Solutions Provider, Cebuana Lhuillier, Prime Channel, Ping Ping Lechon, Bayview Park Hotel and Holiday Plaza-Cebu resumes in two venues tomorrow.

It will be the Spring of NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and Laguna Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro against Mayor Freddie Tinga's Forward Taguig at the C.P. Tinga Gym in Taguig, and the Iligan Crusaders against Cotta Shrine at the Gov. Angel Medina Sr. Gym in Ozamiz.

Mayor Reynaldo Parojinog's Ozamiz boys led 63-51 in the fourth, but Valencia unloaded 13 straight points to put Valencia on top, 64-63.

The scores:

OZAMIZ 77—Aquino 16, Bansil 16, Nicdao 15, Sampilo 7, Cabigkis 7, Ilanga 6, Alvarado 4, Conmigo 2, Delina 2, Libatog 1, Cortes 0, Duyap 0, Basco 0, Caylan 0.

VALENCIA 74—Cabili 21, Berami 17, Toring 10, Adams 9, Royo 6, Caliz 5, Culdora 2, Madera 2, Bayron 2, Mojado 0, Clavel 0, Gragasin 0, Cesar 0, Taligatos 0.

Quarters: 18-16, 35-36, 58-51, 77-74

Sports festival launches Lead to Gold program

By Jasmine W. Payo

OVER a hundred young taekwondo jins—with their parents in tow—milled outside the Moro Lorenzo Gym in Ateneo early Sunday morning.

Despite the humid weather, the kids eagerly queued up for the opening ceremonies of the 2005 Lead to Gold Fiesta, the one-day sports event that kicked off the gold-medal program of the Lead Institute of Sports.

"We're eyeing young talents," said Jobet Morales, national team coach and Lead's taekwondo program director. "The event is for talent identification. We'll be going around the country to look for potential athletes."

The non-profit, non-stock Lead Institute of Sports recently unveiled its national sports program that includes grassroot projects for taekwondo, football and badminton.

Its main goal is to bag a gold medal in the 2008 Beijing Olympics in taekwondo, a title in the 2012 world junior badminton and a gold in the 2015 Asean football championship.

In the sports festival, football program director Vince Santos also organized an evaluation session that assessed the football skills, endurance and flexibility of aspiring athletes.

"We're trying to gauge our players' skill level compared with other Asian countries, so we'll know what we need to work on," said Santos.

Badminton, too, has an ongoing summer program.

"We're concentrating on the young and hoping to motivate them," said Jed Santos, badminton program director. "We're scouting and hopefully we can bring them to training centers if they qualify for the national team."

A one-day badminton tournament for Lead's corporate sponsors was also held last Sunday.

"We had our sponsors and other big corporations come together so we can show them what Lead is all about," said Santos of the competition swept by PLDT.

In the men's division, Hitler Manila and OC Bayot of PLDT-A bagged the title over Arnel Balbuena and Joven Benavides of PLDT-B, 15-17, 15-10, 15-6, while Gigi dela Vina and Vangie de Leon of PLDT-A topped the women's division after outclassing Rain Cano and Sally Cautivo of PLDT-B, 17-16, 15-13.

PLDT-A's Elmer Ferrer and Kristine Mandap topped the mixed division over PLDT-B's Josephine Sy and Bobby Enriquez, 15-9, 15-8.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer, Smart, Siemens, Thames, Entrepreneur and RPN 9 also vied for honors in the tournament.

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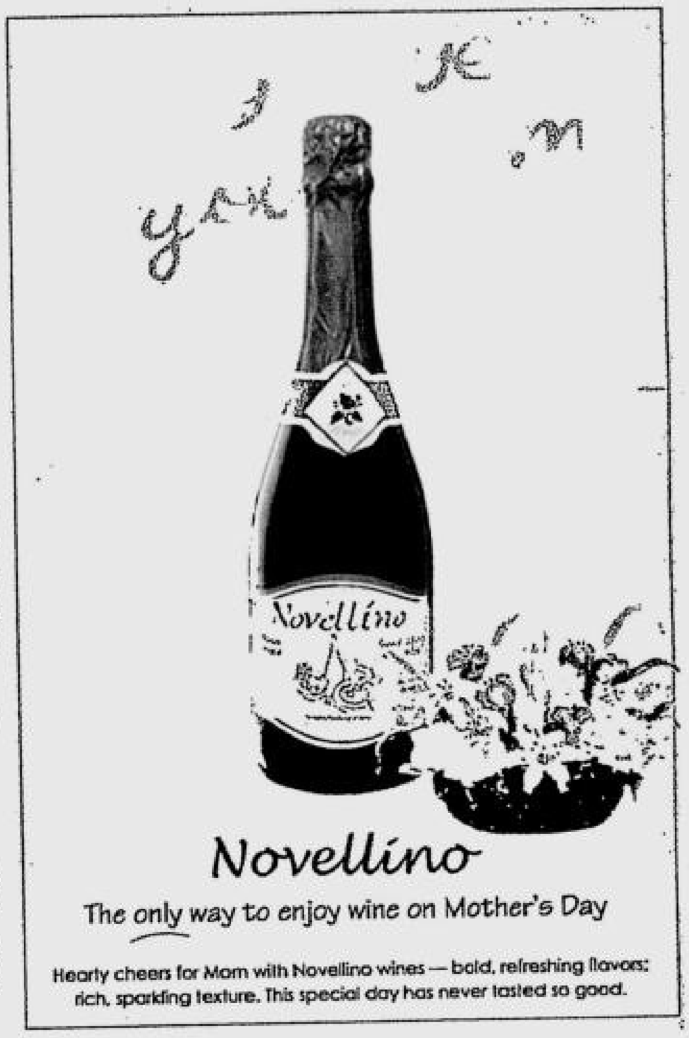

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MEMBERS of the Mindanao contingent take a break in the crystal sands of Boracay. With them is Nestle's Bun Estavillo (extreme right).

Nestea Beach Volley finals Thursday

AFTER the exciting elimination round for Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, the Nestea Beach Volley 2005 shifts to high gear when the semifinal and final rounds are staged at the world-famous island paradise of Boracay from May 5 to 7.

A total of 24 teams, 12 each in the men's and women's divisions, will vie for this year's crown. Champion teams get P100,000 each and P50,000 worth of sports equipment for the school they represent. Second placers get P50,000 and third placers receive P25,000.

The top four men's and women's pairs from the three regions booked tickets to the Boracay phase, a three-day event that also offers a lot of fun and activity like celebrity games for both competitors and beach volley fans.

Luzon will be represented by Adamson University, College of St. Benilde, Far Eastern University and St. Francis of Assisi College in the men's division and College of St. Benilde, FEU, Philippine Christian University-Manila and University of Baguio in the women's division.

From the Visayas are the men's teams of University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, University of San Carlos and University of Southern Philippines. Defending champion University of San Jose-Recoletos with veteran Jonrey Sasing and new partner Joseph Alguno returns to Boracay in a bid to retain their.title.

In the women's division, the semifinalists are Foundation University, USJ-R and Nestea Beach Volley 2004 runner-up University of the Visayas.

As expected, two-time defending champion Southwestern University, with veterans Marites Natad and Florian Gutierrez, will be back in Boracay to defend the crown three times in a row.

The men's teams of Ateneo de Davao University, Mindanao State University, University of Mindanao-Davao and University of Mindanao-Tagum and the women's teams of Holy Cross of Davao College, Mindanao State University, University of Mindanao-Davao and University of Mindanao-Tagum will banner Mindanao.

The Nestea Beach Volley 2005 is sponsored by Speedo, Mikasa, Cebu Pacific, Hey Jude Resorts, La Salle Greenhills, Villa de Oro, Coppertone, Boracay Regency, Power Plant Mall, National Sports Grill and Click the City.com.

Ex-pros plan benefit game for Distrito

By June Navarro

TO GET Rudy Distrito out of a Las Vegas jail, former Philippine Basketball Association players now based in the United States have organized a fund-raising tournament to help their beleaguered colleague.

Billed as the Rudy Distrito Invitational Cup, the event seeks to help raise the $500,000 bail needed for the temporary release of Distrito, who is facing murder charges for allegedly stabbing to death a 24-year-old Mexican-American during a fight in Las Vegas.

Former stars Francis Arnaiz of Toyota and Crispa's Bernard Fabiosa will skipper two of the four teams which will play in the basketball affair on May 8 at the Veteran Sports Complex in Carson, California.

Arnaiz will represent the Bacolod team along with Yves Dignadice, Naning Valenciano, Django Rivera, Vilmer Bañares, Jun Locsin, Rene Cuison, Roland Abilo, Nene Tady and Danny Basilan, among others.

Fabiosa will spearhead a Cebu squad composed of Pongkee Alolor, Jun Jabar, Dondon Ampalayo, Peter Aguilar, Boy Partosa, Rey Yncierto, Jeff McCoy, John Burgos, Anthony Borja and Dean Woo.

Former Shell coach Rino Salazar teams up with Macky De Joya, Noni Robles, Jun Paguinto, Jerome Cueto and Boy Platon for the Manila team while an LA selection, led by Romy Dela Rosa and Danny Capobres, will be the fourth team.

Tickets will be sold at $5 each while participants from the crowd in the three-point shootout will be charged $7 each.

Distrito, 47, allegedly stabbed Juan Amaya following a heated argument at 4805 Deckow Lane Apartments in Las Vegas last Nov. 24. He pleaded not guilty during his arraignment on March 22.

The Las Vegas court had set a $500,000 bail for the Filipino and a Nov. 14 trial date.

Distrito's lawyers, Robert Langford and Susan Burke, said the stabbing was an act of self-defense while prosecutors called it a deliberate act of revenge after Amaya married Distrito's girlfriend, according to Agence France-Presse.

A native of Bacolod City, Distrito was known as "The Destroyer" for his aggressive play during his 15 years in the PBA.

He ended his PBA career in 1995 following the league's decision to ban him for life after committing a flagrant foul against an opponent.

Meanwhile, coach Chot Reyes and his 21-man PBA training pool squad are looking forward to their second pocket tournament against the Trendwest Sydney Kings of Australia on May 9 and 10.

Reyes expects his two RP teams—San Mig Coffee-Team A and Purefoods Sugar Cane Vinegar-Team B—will have a tougher battle against the Kings, three-time and reigning National Basketball League champions.

"I assure our fans that these two games against the Aussies are worth watching. They can't afford to miss these games," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala.

RUDY Distrito (right), battling Alaska import Sean Chambers for the loose ball in this file photo, can gain temporary liberty if the benefit game raises enough cash for his bail bond. PDI PHOTO

Don't touch Zamar, warns top BAP official

From page A21

At the same time, Cojuangco gave Reyes full responsibility to pick the players and the national coach.

Meanwhile, Go Teng Kok, special assistant to Cojuangco, said he believes that what Codiñera is fighting for is moot and academic after the BAP, through vice president Christian Tan, accepted the authority of the basketball committee in a resolution passed last April 25.

That resolution also thanked the PBA and the POC for the help they are extending the BAP as far as the national basketball program is concerned.

"The problem of the BAP has always been leadership," Go said. "Now that we have Mr. Cojuangco, what else do they want? This is for the country. The more they talk, the more the BAP gets in trouble."

The Seaba, however, is strictly an affair of the world basketball federation as a qualifier for the Asian championship. The top two teams in the Asian tournament also make it to the Fiba-organized world championship set in Japan next year.

Codiñera refused to say whether or not Graham Lim, the association's embattled secretary general, is involved in this latest move.

A press statement from the BAP, while expressing appreciation for the support from the POC and the PBA, reiterated the association's autonomy and distinction as the internationally recognized basketball body in the Philippines by the Fiba.

The BAP also stressed that the MOA it signed with the PBA concerns with teams to be sent "specifically to the ABC, Champion's Cup and Jones Cup."

Voice in the wilderness

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

HE CAN be considered now as the voice in the wilderness. But for Elmer Yanga, the need to help Rudy Distrito, charged with murder in America, has become like a devotion (*panata*) to the Black Nazarene of Quiapo. For whatever it's worth, I print the following as faxed to me by *Kasamang* Elmer. It's a letter from Robert L. Langford, Distrito's lawyer, to Rudelyn Sweet Distrito, Distrito's daughter.

April 4, 2005

Ms Rudelyn Sweet Distrito
Carson, CA 90745

Re: State of Nevada vs. Rudy Distrito, Case No. 04F20936X

"Dear Ms Distrito:

"Per your request, here are some facts learned thus far in the above referenced matter.

Your father, Rudy Distrito, is charged in this case with one count of Murder With Use of a Deadly Weapon. His first appearance was before the Honorable Judge Ann Zimmerman in Department 8 of the Las Vegas Court for initial arraignment.

On March 3, 2005, a Preliminary Hearing was held in this matter at which time numerous witnesses were called by the State of Nevada. The testimony of these witnesses, as set forth in our successful motion to obtain bail, was as follows:

1. One of the State's witnesses was Dr. Gary Telgenhoff, a forensic pathologist and mental examiner, who testified concerning the injuries to the deceased, Juan Amaya. Upon cross-examination, Dr. Telgenhoff agreed that the wounds suffered by Mr. Amaya were consistent with a mutual combat fight.

2. Another State witness at the Preliminary Hearing, Richard Crooks, testified concerning what he saw of the confrontation between Mr. Amaya and your father. His testimony was that he saw the two men falling down backward, that Mr. Amaya was on top of Rudy until Rudy succeeded in throwing him off. Mr. Crooks also testified that Rudy told him that Mr. Amaya had a knife, but Mr. Crooks was not able to see either of the men with the knife during the confrontation. Mr. Crooks additionally testified that he knew Mr. Amaya to carry a gun.

3. State witness Cidney Messer, testified somewhat contrary to Mr. Crooks, in that she thought Rudy was the aggressor in the fight and that at one time she saw him with his arm around Mr. Amaya's neck. She also testified that she saw Rudy with his other hand between the two men, consistent with where she saw a wound in Mr. Amaya's back, but she admitted that she never saw the infliction of any wounds, never saw the knife in other person's hand during the confrontation, and went into her house on two occasions during the confrontation.

4. Detective Rogers also testified at the Preliminary Hearing. He testified that when he went to interview Ms Messer and Mr. Crooks, Ms Messer lied to him about Mr. Crooks' whereabouts at the time. She also indicated that there was another male present in Mr. Crooks' home who was hiding in the room with Mr. Crooks, but that he did not recall who that person was. He also indicated that he believed he had requested fingerprint testing on the knife which was recovered as alleged weapon in the case, but that he was not aware of the results of any comparisons performed. We have since learned that there were no prints recovered from the knife.

5. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Justice Court found that there was slight or marginal evidence to bind Mr. Distrito over to District court to face the murder charge, but also indicated that there were more questions raised during the hearing than answers provided.

6. Additional information we have found from the discovery and independent investigation in the case reveals the following:

1.1. The initial 911 call in this case was made by an air conditioning technician who was working on the roof of a building overlooking the parking lot where the confrontation between Rudy and Mr. Amaya occurred. This gentleman indicated that he saw two men "fighting" and that they appeared to be throwing glass.

1.2. The deceased in this case, Juan Amaya, was much younger than Mr. Distrito, and was also bigger than him. The discovery also indicates that he was known to deal drugs and carry a gun.

1.3. According to Ms Messer's statement to police, Mr. Amaya boasted that he was a member of the "Mexican Mafia" and people should not mess with him.

1.4. Record shows that Rudy has no prior criminal history. He is not a citizen of the United States, but his passport was seized by the authorities. Although it is alleged that he left the scene of the confrontation, and left the State of Nevada after the confrontation, he voluntarily turned himself in to authorities, and agreed to return to Las Vegas to deal with the charge against him.

"We think that all of the points listed above provide support for Mr. Distrito's defense to the charge against him."

Helping one in his darkest hour is the supreme Christian action. Let's rally then round *Kasamang* Elmer, a kindred spirit through and through. After all, Rudy Distrito remains innocent until proven guilty.

***

FASTBREAK. Mayo, the whiz kid-in-residence, turned 8 yesterday and, learning that it was also the birthday of Erap's mother on May 2, said: "I need 92 more years to also get to a hundred!" Happy birthday also to my *kumpadres* Nelson Almonguera (May 1) and Tony Royeca (May 3).

SPORTSWATCH

Milo BEST classes start today

MILO BEST Center, the country's most successful basketball school, opens its Tuesday-Friday sessions today at San Beda College-Alabang (formerly St. Benedict College) and Ateneo College covered courts. Level 1 (all age groups) and level 2 (11 below) classes will be held from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. at SBC-Alabang. Level 2 (12 above) and levels 3 and 4 (9 above) clinics will also be conducted from 1 to 4 p.m. at SBC-Alabang. Level 1 & 2 (12 above) and level 4, 5 and 6 sessions will be held from 1 to 4 p.m. at Ateneo. Young boys and girls may register at The BEST Center, 34 Scout Lozano corner Scout Reyes, Barangay Laging Handa, Quezon City (411-6260 and 372-3065/66) and Dansel Groom Shop/Sensei Salon, 5th floor, Manila Pavilion Hotel, UN Avenue (525-8191).

Nat'l Open team chess set

THE 2005 National Open chess team championship will be held in Iligan City on June 13-19. National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP) president Go Teng Kok yesterday said the tournament is open to all chess teams from private and government sectors, schools and universities, clubs or associations. Each participating team, to be composed of four regular players and one alternate, may include only one titled player in its line-up. A cash prize of P100,000 will go to the champion team. Teams may register at the NCFP secretariat at the 4th floor, Tempus Building II, 21-A Matalino Street, Diliman, Quezon City or contact tourney director Willie Abalos (0921-621-9898).

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

200 fights in Texas derby

TWO HUNDRED fights are on tap today in the Super One-Cock Ulutan Fastest Win at the Texas Cockpit Arena along Sumulong Highway, Antipolo City. The derby, which will start at 7 a.m. due to the big number of entries, stakes a guaranteed prize of P630,000 and is hosted by Sam Mendoza of Rizal and Kags and Aba Badiola, who recently promoted the 576-entry PSG Fastest Win Challenge. Pit manager TJ Marquez said the event will be extended until 12 midnight, and that TCA's second *rueda* will be used to accommodate the long line of participants. Entry fee is P2,200. For inquiries, call 646- 2312.

NCA 7-cocker at Big Dome

FIRST-CLASS cockfighting action sizzles today at the Araneta Coliseum as the National Cockers Association (NCA) 7-Cock Derby gets under way at 5 p.m. with 58 fights on the roster. Derby hosts Roger Buenaflor, Efren Canlas, Tony Marfori and Pepito Ngo have invited guest participants from Pampanga, Tarlac, Negros Occidental and Cebu to challenge the NCA's big guns. Meanwhile, two more NCA cockfests are scheduled on May 10 and 12 hosted by Ruel Ricafort, JV Magsaysay and Boy Marzo and on May 17 and 19 hosted by Patrick Antonio. For inquiries, call 911-3101 and 911-2928.

Holy Angel sweeps adidas Streetball elims

GERONIMO Lalic came away with 10 points to power Team Barracks of Holy Angel University to a 20-11 victory over Barangay Del Pilar's Team Cabrera in the Pampanga elimiminations of the adidas Streetball Challenge at the University of Assumption courts in San Fernando City over the weekend.

Marlon Mago chipped in seven points and skipper Josaiah Canlas scored three for Team Barracks, which dominated their rivals from start to finish in the senior division of the pocket tournament sponsored by adidas. Edwin Aquino didn't score for the team.

The victory clinched for Team Barracks, mentored by Rohnel Lansang, a berth in the national finals of this 3-on-3 tournament co-presented by Globe Gentxt.

Christian Aquino made seven points but failed to muster enough support from his teammates.

Team Allude made it a double victory for Holy Angel U as it trounced team Calcetto of St. Nichols Academy, 16-10, to capture the girls' crown in the event backed by McDonald's, Cherifer, Snickers, Coppertone, adidas fragrance, Blue Angel alcohol, Milo, Powerade, Viva Mineral Water, adidas eyewear and Yehey.com.

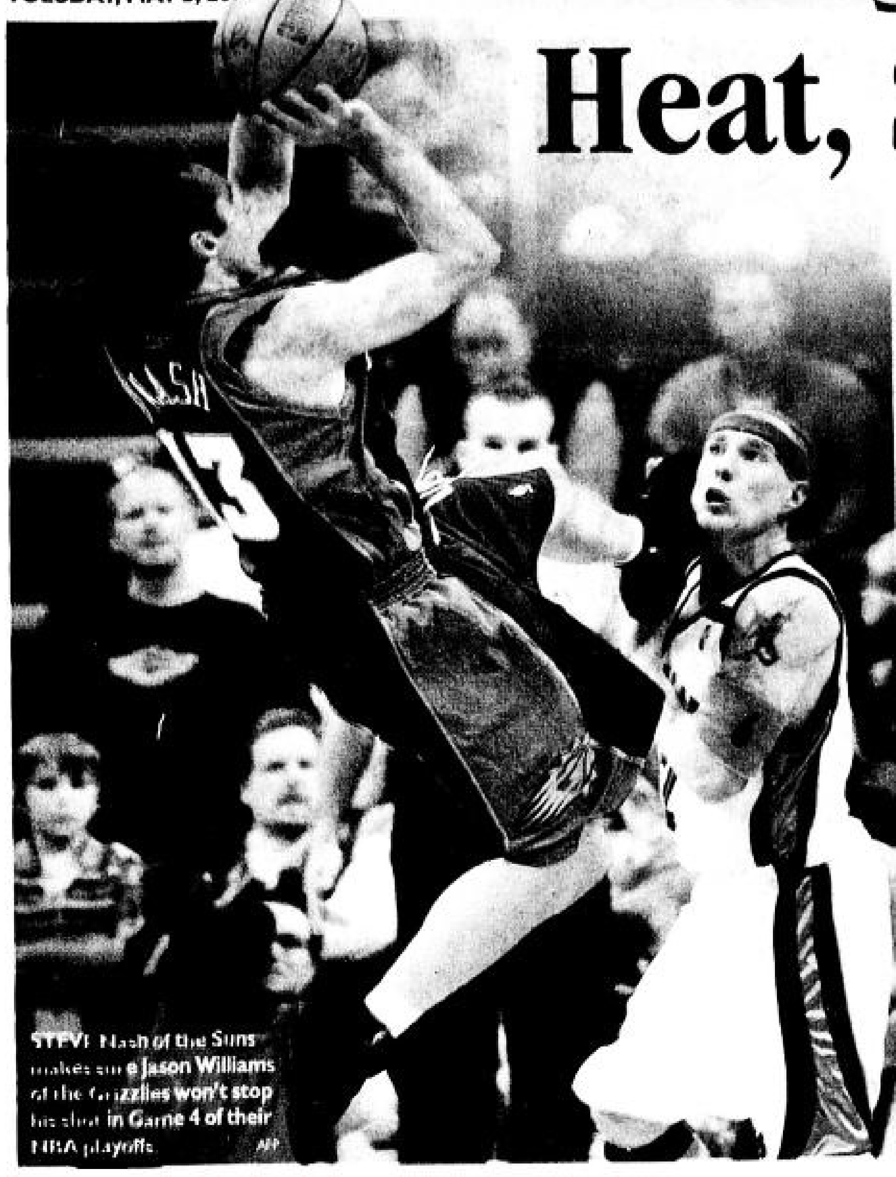
Leann Ramirez and Margot Osio combined for 13 points as Team Allude overpowered Team Calcetto to likewise gain a spot in the national finals slated July 30-31 at the Festival Mall and a crack at the adidas Asian Streetball Finals, also set in Manila, in September.

Kathrina Reyes contributed three points for Allude.

Meanwhile, the screening for the third straight pocket tourney in Batangas will be held tomorrow at Robinsons-Lipa. The tournament proper is set Thursday at La Salle-Lipa. For inquiries, call RJ del Rosario at 0917-905-3794.

Heat, Suns scorch rivals

Breezy ride to NBA quarterfinals


STEVE Nash of the Suns makes sure Jason Williams of the Grizzlies won't stop his shot in Game 4 of their NBA playoffs. AFP

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey—Dwyane Wade had 34 points and nine assists as the Miami Heat completed the first four-game sweep in franchise history with a 110-97 victory on Sunday over the New Jersey Nets.

The top-seeded Heat advanced to the National Basketball Association quarterfinals for the second straight year and will have a week in Miami as they await the winner of the Chicago-Washington series.

Nicknamed "Flash" by teammate Shaquille O'Neal, Wade was unstoppable throughout the series. He averaged 26.4 points, 8.8 assists and 6.3 rebounds while shooting 50 percent from the field.

"My teammates depend on me a lot more (than last season)," Wade said. "I know I'm young in the playoffs, but I just know what I have to do a lot more."

The All-Star guard's big series took the pressure off O'Neal, who still is nursing a bruised thigh.

At no time was that more evident than the first half of the clincher, as Wade scored 21 points to cover for O'Neal, who was scoreless with three fouls.

O'Neal scored all 17 of his points in the second half, including 10 in the third quarter, when Miami took the lead for good.

Jason Kidd halved the deficit with a three-pointer, but the Heat answered with a pair of demoralizing shots—a three-pointer by reserve Keyon Dooling and a layup by Wade. Vince Carter suffered maybe the most embarrassing moment of his career when Wade threw an inbounds pass off Carter's rear, took the carom and scored.

It was that kind of series for Carter and the Nets.

Eddie Jones scored 21 points for the Heat, who had six players in double figures for the third time and shot better than 50 percent for the series.

Kidd scored 25 points and Carter added 23 on just six-of-22 shooting for the eighth-seeded Nets, who won 15 of their last 19 games to make the playoffs but ran into a brick wall.

They were swept out of the postseason for the eighth time in franchise history.

Steve Nash's Phoenix Suns also wrapped up their first-round playoff series on Sunday, dispatching the host Memphis Grizzlies, 123-115.

After banishing Bonzi Wells, the Grizzlies got off to a terrible start on Sunday against the Suns, who completed their first postseason series sweep in 10 years with their usual unstoppable attack.

The eighth-seeded Grizzlies, formerly of Vancouver, were totally overmatched as they fell to 0-8 all-time in the postseason.

They surrendered an average of 113.8 points and were toyed with by the Suns, who earned week off.

Before the game, the Grizzlies announced that Wells had missed the pregame shootaround and would not come to the game "by mutual agreement."

Although Wells had not played much in the series, the circumstance was a distraction. Grizzlies guard Jason Williams was one of a handful of teammates who wore Wells' No. 6 wristband in support.

Joe Johnson scored 25 points to lead six players in double figures for the Suns, who completed their first four-game sweep in franchise history.

The Philadelphia 76ers could soon be joining the Grizzlies and Nets on the sidelines.

Chauncy Billups scored 12 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter as Detroit registered a 97-92 win over Philadelphia and claimed a 3-1 lead in their first-round playoff series here Sunday.

Ray Allen scored 45 points as Seattle took a commanding 3-1 series lead with a 115-102 win over Sacramento. *AFP*

Petrovic clinches 1st PGA title

NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana—Tim Petrovic sank a 20-foot birdie putt on the 72nd hole and beat James Driscoll with a par on the first playoff hole to capture his first US PGA title here Sunday at the Zurich Classic.

Americans Petrovic and Driscoll each finished 72 holes at 13-under par 275 and Petrovic sank a four-foot par putt on the par-5 18th in the playoff for the victory, worth $990,000 at the $5.5 million event.

"It feels great," said Petrovic, whose brother served as a fill-in caddie. "A lot of emotions are going through me right now."

Petrovic was twice a PGA runner-up, at the 2002 St. Jude Classic and the 2003 Pennsylvania Classic, but came through with his wife and daughters in attendance.

Masters runner-up Chris DiMarco, a playoff loser in the past two majors, found more frustration with a 72nd-hole bogey to miss the playoff. He has not won a US PGA event since the 2002 Phoenix Open.

Petrovic became the fourth first-time US PGA winner on tour this year, joining Ireland's Padriag Harrington, Australia's Peter Lonard and American Joe Ogilvy.

Having once had to resort to delivering pizzas to sustain his pro golf dream, Petrovic made the most of his first PGA playoff, the third at this event in the past six years.

Driscoll, the 2000 US Amateur runner-up in only his 22nd US PGA event, went 12 feet past the cup on a 30-foot birdie putt. Petrovic followed by leaving his 25-foot putt four feet short.

Driscoll, never better than 16th in any prior PGA appearance, judged the speed of his downhill par putt correctly but the ball rolled to a halt right of the cup.

Driscoll's bogey, only his second of the week following the third hole of his final round, gave Petrovic his chance. Petrovic drained the putt and lifted his arms in victory.

Driscoll took home $594,000, more than four times what he had made through his prior 10 events this year combined.

DiMarco, Petrovic, Driscoll and Lucas Glover shared the lead at 13-under par with three holes to play, setting up a final drama between three men seeking their first US PGA title and drought-riddled DiMarco.

Petrovic, 28, took bogeys at the 15th and 17th to fall off the pace but dropped an uphill 20-footer for birdie at the par-5 18th to match DiMarco and Driscoll for the lead.

DiMarco put the ball 15 feet from the cup while Driscoll dropped the ball five feet from the hole. *AFP*

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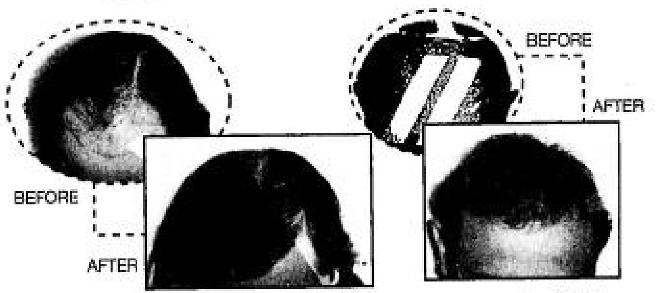

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Els completes 13-shot victory in Asian Open

ELS blasts his ball out from a sand trap on the 14th hole during the final round. AFP

SHANGHAI, China—Ernie Els ran away with the BMW Asian Open on Monday, finishing off a 13-stroke victory with a bogey-free 7-under 65.

The South African star, a three-time winner this year on the PGA European Tour, had a 26-under 262 total on the Tomson Shanghai Pudong Golf Club course in the event co-sanctioned by the Asian Tour.

Els opened with rounds of 67, 62 and 68 and had an eight-stroke lead through six holes in the final round Sunday when play was suspended because of rain and darkness. He played the final 12 holes in 4 under Monday.

The three-time major champion fell short of his European and Asian tour record of 29 under set in the 2003 Johnnie Walker Classic at Lake Karrinyup in Perth, Australia. He won consecutive European tour events in March in Dubai and Qatar.

England's Simon Wakefield (73) finished second at 13 under.

Denmark's Thomas Bjorn (72) was third at 12 under, New Zealand's Eddie Lee (72) and France's Jean-Francois Lucquin (73) tied for fourth at 10 under, and Englishmen Luke Donald (72) and Stuart Little (72) followed at 9 under. *AP*

MR. AND MS PHILIPPINES

Trazona tops welter division

ALFREDO Trazona Jr. topped the 75 kg (welterweight) division of the 2005 Mr. and Ms Philippines held at the Star City theatre in Pasay City recently.

The 34-year-old Trazona, gold medalist in the 2001 Southeast Asia bodybuilding championship and Vietnam SEA Games bronze medalist, beat silver medalist Armando Villasoto, bronze medalist Gerardo Bautista and three others for the title.

Michael Borenaga, a victim of hit-and-run last week, ruled the 60 kg (flyweight), beating Fernando Faroden and Rey Ylanan, who settled for the silver and bronze, respectively.

Nelson Totanes ruled the 55 kg (light flyweight), Rex Dellava took the silver and Ruthelo Labestre got the bronze. Winfield Panao dominated the 65 kg (bantamweight), followed by Roderick Mondoy and Rogelio Almasa.

Other winners were Rodrick Ternida 70 kg (light welterweight), Jay Briones 80 kg (light middleweight), and Antonio Majanares 85 kg (middleweight).

Myra Villanueva, won the women's open division, beating Annie Grace Yatar and Maria Lourdes Narciso, who settled for the silver and bronze, respectively.

RACING TIPS

AT SANTA ANA BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. Diva 2. Classic Model 3. El Cid 4. Speed Mountain
Race 2—1. Sound Offer 2. Speed O War 3. Sir Golden Score 4. Material Ruler
Race 3—1. War Alert 2. Sir Pierre 3. Ahoy My Boy 4. Golden Lance 5. Cool Reception
Race 4—1. Material Ruler 2. Sunline 3. U Are My Sunshine 4. White Princess
Race 5—1. Revelation 2. Strong Jays 3. Leading Man 4. Princess Adarna 5. Best Strike
Race 6—1. Montezuma 2. Sir Bradnan Jean 3. San Diego Force 4. Gemstone
Race 7—1. Holy King 2. Aminin 3. Extreme Illusion 4. Si Isidro Ko 5. Magical Charm
Race 8—1. Noble House 2. Pivotal 3. Rebound 4. Cool Clay 5. Sham Sham 6. Real Material

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Mark Anthony, doting dad

DOLLYWOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

I'VE always had a soft spot for **Mark Anthony Fernandez** because he's my godbrother. No doubt my mom is smiling from up above seeing her *inaanak* finally clean up his act.

I remember the time when Mark and I were guests in a talk show. The topic was misunderstood children of celebrities. Now that Mark is out of rehab (for the second and last time) he needs all the understanding he can get. Why be judgmental toward him? We all have to face the final judgment one day. That's all that matters.

I was delighted to bump into Mark in Greenhills. He was waiting for his wife **Melissa** to finish shopping. His boyish charms are still intact but he no longer has that "little lost boy" look. Instead, he was the picture of a doting dad to his cute 3-year-old boy **Cameron** (his eldest kid **Chesi** is 7) who gamely posed when I asked him to. He's definitely a show biz kid!

Mark was smoking a cigarette when I saw him. He's just human. He also drinks occasionally. But no more drugs for him. "I plan to stay clean, live a healthier life and just take care of my family," Mark said, smiling. It's his half-brother **Vandolph** who now gets into all sorts of trouble. His heart goes out to Vandolph. "I hope the people won't judge him," he said. "They should not forget that it could also happen to them. *Di naman kagustuhan ni* Vandolph *ang mga nangyari sa kaniya.*"

I asked what he could say about his ex-girlfriend **Claudine Barretto**'s engagement to **Raymart Santiago**? "Closed book *na yun*. I don't want to get involved in any more issues about her. All I want to tell the people is to support local TV shows and movies," he quipped. Wouldn't it be great to see him in a movie with his dad **Rudy Fernandez**? Mark Anthony is truly moving forward. And with his newfound determination, he'll be moving up as well!

CAMERON Fernandez

RIKI Kwek and Chris Mathay

Riki weds

AFTER telling you about my godbrother, allow me to share some highlights about my "sister's" (newscaster/TV personality **Riki Kwek**) wedding. She married **Chris Mathay** last April 27 at The Shrine of Jesus Church. Reception was at the Coconut Palace. It was an intimate affair. The couple invited only those who were close to them because they did not want to turn it into a carnival. "We carefully chose our godparents—*yung malapit talaga sa amin. Hindi yung para masabi mo lang na ninong mo* is some famous person," Riki said. "Some of our godparents are Chris' *lolo* **Mel Mathay** and my personal friends **Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, Korina Sanchez, Boy Abunda and Joy Lim**, to name a few."

Chris' half-sister, **Ara Mina**, was in the wedding entourage. Ara brought the Raging Divas and the Real Groove band to perform at the reception. The blooming bride revealed: "Ara is really well-loved and accepted by the Mathays. *'Kakatuwa nga*, Chris looks like a male Ara Mina! Chris and I would like to thank Daddy **Chuck** for all the support. And also super thanks to my mom and dad. They gave us a brand new house!" The Mathays are flying to Dubai for their honeymoon. Riki kept crying as she danced with her dad under the moon and the stars. "I'm such a daddy's girl!" Now she is Chris Mathay's girl for keeps. I've never seen a couple have so much fun the way Chris and Riki do. There's never a dull moment with them. They are a refreshing reminder to couples that marriage ought to be playful. That's the best antidote to your partner's playing around elsewhere.

Congrats, Sis and Chris! Keep the love playing!

Spotted the ever charming **Nina Castro** with her boyfriend **Vince** at the reception. Even if she did not catch the bouquet that night, I'm sure she'll make a beautiful bride if and when she and Vince take the plunge. For now Nina is busy with hosting chores and Vince is more than happy to watch her "grow."

Laughter, tears

THE CAST of "Quizon Avenue" were so touched when they brought food to the Cebu Hope center for abandoned and abused children. The comedians were there to make the orphans laugh, but the children moved them to tears.

(For feedback, e-mail wateringhole-shangrila@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com)

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5 GOLD (DOLBY) THE INTERPRETER
6 GOLD (SDDS) PACIFIER
7 GOLD (DOLBY) XXX - 2 THE NEXT LEVEL
8 (PRDS) RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
9 (PRDS) SAHARA
10 (DOLBY) CAN THIS BE LOVE

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6 CAN THIS BE LOVE

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3 SAHARA
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3 (DTS EX) HIDE AND SEEK
4 SAMARA (RING 2)

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2 XXX-2 THE NEXT LEVEL
3 (DOLBY) HIDE AND SEEK
4 (DTS) SAMARA (RING 2)

Cine Nepo
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2 SAHARA
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4 (DTS) BE COOL

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4 GUESS WHO

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4 (DOLBY) CAN THIS BE LOVE

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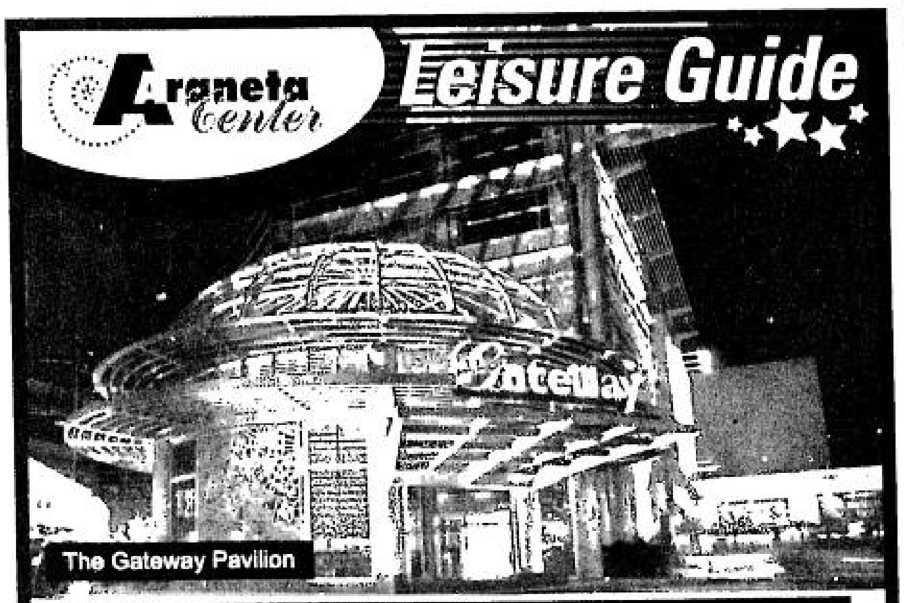

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1:10 / 3:45 / 6:20 / 9:00
XXX: STATE OF THE UNION
12:40 / 3:00 / 5:20 / 7:40 / 10:00
CAN THIS BE LOVE
12:40 / 3:00 / 5:20 / 7:40 / 10:00
FINDING NEVERLAND
2:00 / 4:20 / 6:40 / 9:00
THE INTERPRETER
1:20 / 4:10 / 7:00 / 9:50
THE WEDDING DATE
1:30 / 3:30 / 5:30 / 7:30 / 9:30
THE PACIFIER
1:20 / 3:20 / 5:20 / 7:20 / 9:20
SAHARA
1:30 / 4:10 / 6:50 / 9:30

ALI MALL CINEMAS
❶ CAN THIS BE LOVE
11:30 / 1:50 / 4:10 / 6:30 / 8:50
❷ XXX: STATE OF THE UNION
11:30 / 1:50 / 4:10 / 6:30 / 8:50
❸ SAHARA
12:10 / 2:50 / 5:30 / 8:10
❹ RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
11:15 / 2:10 / 5:05 / 8:10
❺ THE INTERPRETER
12:00 / 2:50 / 5:40 / 8:30
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ARANETA COLISEUM EVENTS
2005 PBA FIESTA CONFERENCE May 4
4:45pm Coke vs. Purefoods / 7:35pm Talk N Text vs Red Bull
THE 'C' SHOW
May 21, Saturday, 8pm
KEVYN LETTAU: MEMORIES OF LOVE
May 14, Saturday, 8pm
ASHANTI LIVE IN MANILA
May 26, Thursday, 8pm

CENTER EVENTS
GATEWAY MALL — The Saturday Group Art Exhibit Featuring the combined works of the premier artists' group in the country including Mauro "Malang" Santos. May 2 to 15, Upper Ground Floor, Gateway Mall
NEW STORES — Fully Booked (Level 2), Time Zone (Level 3), Cello (Ground Floor) & Kashieca (Level 3) at Gateway Mall
PERFORMANCES — Tropicana, John Lesaca & Buhay featuring Tots Tolentino are set to perform on May 6, 7 & 8 at The Gateway Pavilion.
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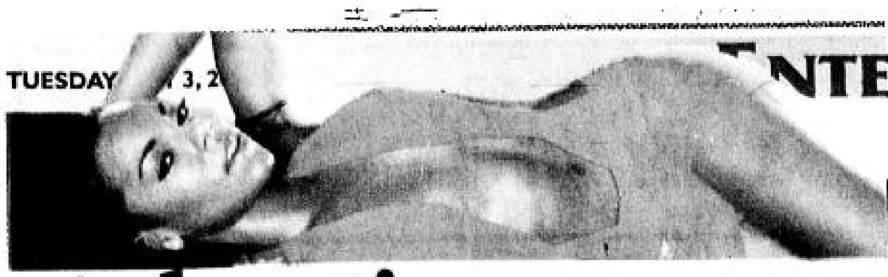

ASHANTI

Ashanti —Live in Manila!

"ASHANTI—Live in Manila" is set May 26 at the Araneta Coliseum.

The concert will surely be a treat for her fans, who have followed her career since her debut in 2002, when she topped the charts with multiple hit singles. These chart-toppers include "Rock With U (Awww Baby)," "Happy," "Foolish," "Rain On Me," "Breakup 2 Makeup," "Baby" and "Only U."

Ashanti built her reputation around duets with Ja Rule ("Always On Time"), Fat Joe ("What's Luv?"), and Notorious BIG ("Unfoolish").

Her debut album sold 500,000 copies in its first week.

Says the R&B songbird: "I want to create something so real and reflective, people will just sit back and listen like, wow, she was at my window last night." Call 9115555.

SHOW TIME

Tonight

Hot Babes **Katya Santos, Andrea del Rosario, Gwen Garci, JC Castro** and **Jennifer Lee** at **Classmate Digital KTV** in Quezon City

Tomorrow

Paolo Santos at **'70s Bistro**, Anonas St., QC. Call 4343597

Wednesday Jazz Festival with **Lynn Sherman** at **Merk's**

May 5

Luke Mejares, Keith Martin and **Aretha and the Souled Out** Band at Merk's

Wunjo at **'70s Bistro**, Anonas St., QC. Call 4343597

May 6

"Bedazzled II" at **Club Mwah!**, Fridays and Saturdays; 10:30 p.m. Call 5357943

The Jerks at **'70s Bistro**, Fridays. Call 434-3597

"StarStruck Superstar" concert series at **Enchanted Kingdom**, 7 p.m.

May 9

Rivermaya at **'70s Bistro**, Anonas St., QC. Call 4343597

May 11

Wednesday Jazz Festival with **Lynn Sherman** at **Merk's**

Paolo Santos at **'70s Bistro**, Anonas St., QC. Call 4343597

May 12

Aubrey Miles, Francine Prieto, Jeni Hernandez, Sheree and **Belinda Bright** at "Metal Dreams: FHM 100 Sexiest Women in the World Victory Party" at the **NBC Tent**, The Fort; 8 p.m.

Bridge at **'70s Bistro**, Anonas St., QC. Call 4343597

May 13 and 14

Ella May Saison is back in "Soulful, the Concert" at the **Music Museum. Nina, Akafellas** and **Jimmy Bondoc** are guest performers. Call 891-9999.

May 13 and 15

Alvin Barcelona, a Catholic lay preacher and singer-songwriter, in his first major concert, "Believe," at the **Party Central**, Mother Ignacia Avenue. For inquiries, reservations and sponsorships, call Beaconlight, 7229562, or e-mail beacon@philonline.com.

ELLA MAY Saison

May 14

RJ Guitar Festival: The Concert at the **Antel Entertainment Complex**, Makati Ave. Corner Gen. Luna St. Performers include **Nyoy Volante, Aiza Seguerra, Noel Cabangon, Paolo Santos, Florante, Pido, Rene Garcia** of the Hotdog, **The Dawn, Rage Band, Jun Lopito** and **Joey Puyat.**

Razorback at **'70s Bistro**, Anonas St., QC. Call 4343597

Jed Madela in "Songs Rediscovered Live" at **Plaza Beatriz Hotel** in Ozamiz City

Faith Cuneta at **SM Baguio.**

"Spettacolo Pirotecnico," light and fireworks show at **Enchanted Kingdom**, 9 p.m.

'Swing for a Cause' set

THE FIRST Mowelfund Golf Cup, marking the Movie Workers Welfare Foundation's 31st Anniversary, is set on May 12 at Capitol Hills Golf Club in Quezon City.

"Swing For A Cause" is intended to augment the foundation's benefits/assistance to its almost 4,000 members, low-income workers of the movie industry.

Celebrity invitees include: First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, Congressman Mikey Arroyo, Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, Congressman Francis Escudero, Richard Gomez, Ogie Alcasid, Aga Muhlach, Charlene Gonzales, Beverly Vergel, Councilor Aiko Melendez, Cesar Montano, Gary Lising, Vic Sotto, KBP Directors Rey Langit, Manny Luzon, Ricky Alegre, Deo Macalma, RPN-9 chair Cerge Remonde, Congressman Ronaldo Zamora, HUDCC vice chair Amado Bagatsing, Edgar Mortiz and Dingdong Dantes.

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THE NEXT LEVEL
REVOLUTION STUDIOS
COLUMBIA PICTURES
www.SonyPictures.net
Distributed by COLUMBIA PICTURES

SHANG CINEPLEX

① XXX 2
MTRCB: PG-13
12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00

② THE INTERPRETER
MTRCB. PG-13
10:50, 1:40, 4:30,7:20, 10:10

③ CAN THIS BE LOVE
MTRCB: GP P120.00
12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30,10:00

④ GUESS WHO
MTRCB: PG-13
11:30, 2:05, 4:40, 7:15, 9:50

PREMIERE THEATRE THE JACKET
MTRCB: PG-13 . 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice

Get Your Star Wars Movie Tickets Early!

Be one of the first to catch the simultaneous U.S. screening of Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith at the Shang Cineplex on May 18! Premiere screening starts at 10:00pm

Advance tickets* for sale at no extra service fee from May 6, 2005 onwards. Available at the Shang Cineplex ticket counters at Level 6 and the ticket booth at Level 1.

* Selected screenings from May 18-22

Regular Ticket Price
Cinemas 1 to 4 - P150
Premiere Theatre - P295 (includes unlimited popcorn and beverage)
Call 633-7851, loc. 171 or 633-2227 / 633-4735 for more details.
Shangri-La Plaza

THEATRE MALL
GREENHILLS
a landmark reinvented!
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND·EX
NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 1
GUESS WHO
11:40, 2:25, 5:00, 7:35, 10:10
PG13

CINEMA 2
TRIPLE X 2
10:50, 1:05, 3:20, 5:35, 7:50, 10:10
PG13

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.
GREENHILLS SHOPPING CENTER, ORTIGAS AVENUE, GREENHILLS, SAN JUAN, METRO MANILA • 7224496

MUSIC MUSEUM
MAY 6 MONIQUE WILSON 9:00PM
MAY 7 2005 ZSA ZSA PADILLA & KARYLLE 9:00PM
FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL: 721-6726 OR 721-0635

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. (C-5) Quezon City
Voted Best Movie Theater
-Philippine Daily Inquirer's 2004 Yearend Reader Survey
For inquiries, call.
687-6963
GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1 THE INTERPRETER
12:05, 2:55, 5:45
8:35, 11:10
PG-13

2 XXX 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
10:55, 1:20, 3:45
6:10, 8:35, 11:00
PG-13

3 GUESS WHO?
12:35, 3:10, 5:45
8:20, 10:50
PG-13

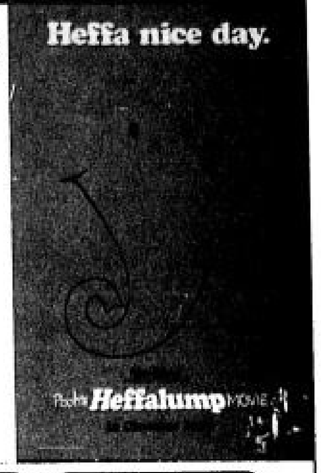
4 CAN THIS BE LOVE
1:05, 3:35, 6:05
8:35, 11:00
GP

star group of cinemas movie guide
IN DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND

starmall EDSA-SHAW
Tel. No. 726.61.60
3 Paraiso
4 Can This Be Love
5 XXX 2
Kids Salon and Fashion Show Starmall Edsa Apr 30 Saturday 2nd Level Food Court, 4pm

METROPOLIS ALABANG STAR
Tel. No. 850.42.85
1 Ring of Nibelungs
2 Paraiso
3 Under Renovation
4 Under Renovation
5 XXX 2
6 Can This Be Love

starmall LAS PIÑAS
Tel. No. 874.43.89
1 Son of the Mask
2 Rental Reservation
Star Model Search Live at Metropolis Star Alabang April 29-30 Fri. n Sat. 2pm



SM CINEMA movietime™
Heffa nice day.
Pooh's Heffalump MOVIE

WINNIE THE POOH AND THE HUNDRED ACRE WOOD GANG ARE TOGETHER AGAIN IN
POOH'S HEFFALUMP MOVIE!
THIS TIME, THEY ARE IN SEARCH OF A LOAD-RUMBLING NOISE THAT COULD ONLY BE MADE BY HEFFALUMP - A " MUCH-FEARED NEW CREATION" THE WHOLE GANG DEEMED TO BE.

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SM PREMIERE CINEMAS.

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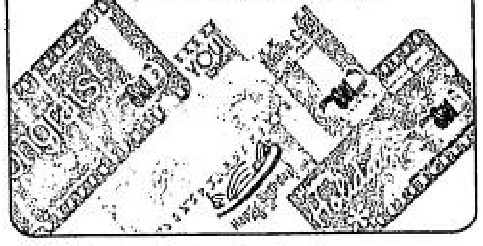
VISITUS@ www.smcinema.co



Express your feelings with these great moviecards in cool designs.
SM CINEMA
Say it with moviecards
The perfect reward for movie lovers on their special day!

GUARANTEED SEATS

the podium cinema
1. xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
11:50 FS / 12:20 MF / 2:25 / 4:30 / 6:35
8:40 / 10:20 LFS / 10:45 LMF / 12:25 END
2. THE INTERPRETER
12:00 FS / 12:30 MF / 3:05 / 5:40
8:15 / 10:25 LFS / 10:50 LMF / 1:00 END
☎ 633-6976

sm megamall cinema 1
GUESS WHO
11:30 FS / 12:00 MF / 2:10
3:55 LFS / 4:20 LMF / 6:05 END
☎ 633-1901

sm cebu cinema
CINEMA 1: SAHARA
12:00 MF / 12:18 / 2:36 / 4:54 / 7:12
9:16 LFS / 9:30 LMF / 11:35 END
CINEMA 3: xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
11:30 MF / 1:30 / 3:30 / 5:30 / 7:30
9:10 LFS/ 9:30 LMF / 11:10 END
☎ (032) 231-3876

METRO MANILA

sm megamall
1 GUESS WHO
2 THE INTERPRETER
3 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
4 CAN THIS BE LOVE
5 SAMARA: RING 2
6 SAHARA
7 RESERVED
8 RESERVED
9 RESERVED
10 xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
11 CAN THIS BE LOVE
12 THE WEDDING DATE

sm city fairview
1 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
2 GUESS WHO
3 THE WEDDING DATE
4 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
5 SAHARA
6 CAN THIS BE LOVE
7 xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
8 THE PACIFIER
9 SAMARA: RING 2
10 THE INTERPRETER
11 THE JACKET
12 CAN THIS BE LOVE

sm city north edsa
1 xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
2 CAN THIS BE LOVE
3 RESERVED
4 THE WEDDING DATE
5 CAN THIS BE LOVE
6 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
7 GUESS WHO
8 xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL

sm city manila
1 THE WEDDING DATE
2 GUESS WHO
3 THE INTERPRETER
4 xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
5 FINDING NEVERLAND
6 SAHARA
7 SAMARA: RING 2
8 THE PACIFIER
9 CAN THIS BE LOVE
10 THE JACKET
11 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
12 CAN THIS LOVE

sm city sta. mesa
1 xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
2 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
3 CAN THIS BE LOVED
4 RESERVED
5 RESERVED
6 THE WEDDING DATE
7 THE INTERPRETER
8 SAHARA
9 CAN THIS BE LOVE
10 GUESS WHO

sm city southmall
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
4 THE INTERPRETER
5 FINDING NEVERLAND
6 THE WEDDING DATE
7 THE JACKET
8 SAMARA: RING 2
9 SAHARA
10 GUESS WHO

sm city bicutan
1 SAHARA
2 THE WEDDING DATE
3 GUESS WHO
4 SAMARA: RING 2

sm cinema tutuban
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

sm supercenter sucat
1 GUESS WHO
2 SAMARA: RING 2
3 SAHARA
4 THE WEDDING DATE

LUZON

sm city pampanga
1 xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
2 SAMARA: RING 2
3 THE WEDDING DATE
4 HIDE AND SEEK
5 THE PACIFIER
6 CAN THIS BE LOVE

sm city baguio
1 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
2 CURSED
3 THE PACIFIER
4 CLOSER

sm city batangas
1 xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
2 CAN THIS BE LOVE
3 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
4 CAN THIS BE LOVE

sm city dasmariñas
1 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
2 HIDE AND SEEK
3 SAMARA: RING 2
4 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS

sm city marilao
1 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
2 HIDE AND SEEK
3 THE WEDDING DATE
4 SAMARA: RING 2

sm city bacoor
1 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
2 SAMARA: RING 2
3 xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
4 CAN THIS BE LOVE
5 xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
6 CAN THIS BE LOVE
7 SAHARA
8 THE JACKET

sm city lucena
1 CURSED
2 HIDE AND SEEK
3 CLOSER
4 MS. CONGENIALITY 2

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

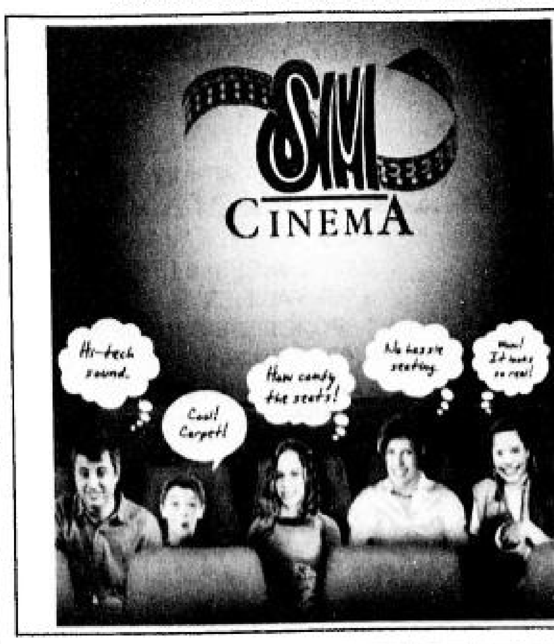
sm city cebu
1 SAHARA
2 RESERVED
3 xXx 2: THE NEXT LEVEL
4 THE PACIFIER
5 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
6 FINDING NEVERLAND
7 BE COOL
8 CAN THIS BE LOVE

sm city iloilo
1 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
2 RESERVED
3 BE COOL
4 THE PACIFIER
5 BOOGEYMAN
6 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
7 RESERVED
8 SAMARA: RING 2

sm city davao
1 THE PACIFIER
2 SAHARA
3 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
4 HOSTAGE
5 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
6 HIDE AND SEEK

sm city cagayan de oro
1 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
2 THE PACIFIER
3 BE COOL
4 SAMARA: RING 2

SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE



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We invite you to SM Premiere Cinemas.
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SM Southmall - Cinemas 3 & 4
SM Cebu - Cinemas 3 & 4
SM Megamall - Cinemas 10, 11 & 12
Coming soon on April 30 at
SM North Edsa - Cinemas 1 & 2

Hi-tech sound.
Cool Carpet!
How comfy the seats!
No hassle seating.
Wow! It looks so real!

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

MOVIEWORLD

CINEMA ACCESS
635-5555
FOR ALL BRANCHES

www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

MOVIES/SCHEDULES/PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA 632-9115/16

1 XXX 2 • THX
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30
2 XXX 2
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
3 THE INTERPRETER
11:20 2:00 4:40 7:20 10:00
4 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
10:40 1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00
5 GUESS WHO?
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
6 THE WEDDING DATE
11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00
7 THE JACKET
1:25 3:35 5:45 7:55 10:00
8 SAHARA
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00
9 THE PACIFIER
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
10 SAMARA RING 2
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 XXX 2
11:05 1:15 3:25 5:35 7:45 10:00
2 GUESS WHO?
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
3 SAHARA
11:10 1:50 4:30 7:10 9:50
4 THE JACKET
10:40 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
5 THE WEDDING DATE
10:20 12:15 2:10 4:05 6:00 7:55 10:00
6 THE INTERPRETER
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
7 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
11:10 1:50 4:30 7:10 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 BOSO
11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
2 SAHARA
12:30 3:20 6:10 9:00
3 THE JACKET
11:10 1:40 4:10 6:40 9:10
4 THE WEDDING DATE
11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
5 THE INTERPRETER
11:20 1:40 4:00 6:30 9:00
6 GUESS WHO?
11:20 1:40 4:00 6:10 8:30 10:30
7 XXX 2
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:20
8 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
12:20 3:15 6:10 9:10

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 XXX 2
1:55 4:05 6:15 8:30
2 THE INTERPRETER
11:50 2:40 5:30 8:25
3 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
11:50 2:40 5:30 8:20
4 THE JACKET
12:50 3:20 5:50 8:20
5 GUESS WHO?
10:20 12:50 3:20 5:50 8:25
6 XXX 2
10:40 12:50 3:00 5:10 7:20
7 RESERVE
8 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 XXX 2
2 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS
3 GUESS WHO?
4 THE INTERPRETER

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 HOSTAGE
2 CURSED
3 THE WEDDING DATE
4 PARAISO

CAINTA 240-4661

1 XXX 2
2 THE JACKET
3 SAHARA
4 PARAISO

Asterix & Obelix
VERSUS CAESAR

Asterix & Obelix VERSUS CAESAR **France's favorite funny cartoon heroes in live-action movie!**

"The well-known little village from the Asterix and Obelix comic books is in trouble. It is the last place not controlled by Rome. When tax collector Claudius Incorruptus does not get his money from the villagers, Julius Caesar himself comes to the place to see what's so special about their resistance. A special magic potion, prepared by the village's Druid, gives incredible power to those who drink it. Obelix, who fell into the pot as a child, has been invincible ever since. With the help of Tullius Destructivus, an intriguer, the Romans try to get Obelix and the Druid into their hands in order to wipe the little village off the map, when the last potion of its stock has been used up. But each individual also has some plans of his own..."

watch it exclusively at

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD IMUS and DASMA
april 27-may 03

STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 XXX 2
2 GUESS WHO?
3 OK KA, PARE KO
4 SAMARA RING 2
5 ASTERIX AND OBELIX

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870

1 XXX 2
2 PONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
3 SAMARA RING 2
4 BOOGEYMAN
5 HOSTAGE

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332

1 XXX 2
2 GUESS WHO?
3 PARAISO
4 HOSTAGE
5 ASTERIX AND OBELIX

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 XXX 2
2 HIDE AND SEEK
3 SAMARA RING 2
4 OK KA, PARE KO

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-4188

1 XXX 2
2 PARAISO
3 ASTERIX AND OBELIX
4 CURSED
5 BOSO
6 SAHARA

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

1 HIDE AND SEEK
2 PARAISO
3 THE WEDDING DATE
4 SAMARA RING 2
5 XXX 2
6 XXX 2

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459

1 XXX 2
2 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
3 XXX 2
4 THE PACIFIER
5 BOOGEYMAN
6 SAMARA RING 2

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 XXX 2
2 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
3 THE PACIFIER
4 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
5 HIDE AND SEEK
6 SAMARA RING 2

MOVIE PASS
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For marketing and events/reservations please call Marketing Services Department at 687-7945 to 47 locals 14 and 15

AYALA CENTER GLORIETTA • GREENBELT
ALABANG TOWN CENTER
AYALA CENTER CEBU
AYALA MALLS **LoveMall!**

ALOHA YO
Featuring music from Disney's LILO & STITCH ISLAND FAVORITES

AYALA CENTER	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU	TOWER RECORDS
April 21 & 22 6:30 pm April 23 & 24 11:30 am, 3pm & 6pm Glorietta Activity Center	April 29, 30 & May 1 3pm & 6pm Activity Center	May 6 to 8 11 am & 6pm Activity Center	LoveMall! www.ayalamalls.com.ph

Catch Lilo's summer musical show live at the Ayala Malls featuring Bea Binene as LILO, Chynna Ortaleza and Nadine Samonte as NANI, Dion Ignacio and Tyrone Perez as DAVID, Paul Salas as DANIEL. Plus the SOP boys - Emil and Yexel. Directed by Freddie Santos

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
Sponge Cola & Sugarfree Live! May 5, 2005	Watch Kuh Ledesma Live! May 7, 2005	Childlink Learning Center's Summer Culminating Program May 3, 2005

AYALA GREENBELT

Greenbelt Theatrical Nights :
Saturday Night Fever
May 6&7 ; 20&21, 2005

GREENBELT 1 Onstage

REPERTORY PHILIPPINES presents
Whose Wife is it Anyway?
at REP's GLOBE THEATER for the Month of April
For inquiries, please call 887-0710

Ayala MUSEUM

Visit the New Ayala Museum located beside Greenbelt 4 along Makati Avenue.
For inquiries, please call 757-7117.

AYALA CINEMAS

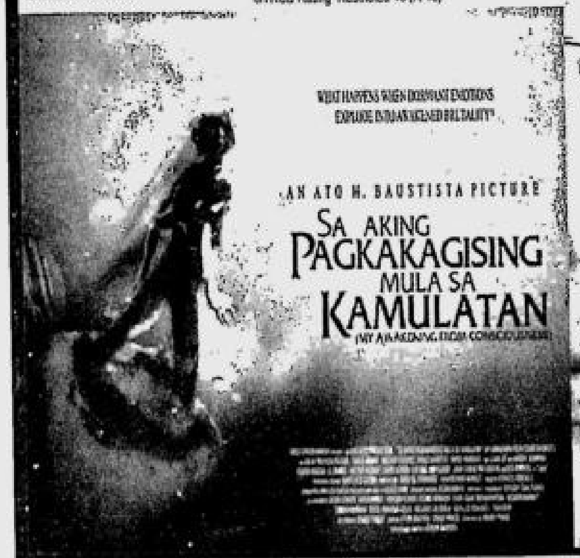
AYALA CINEMAS THX

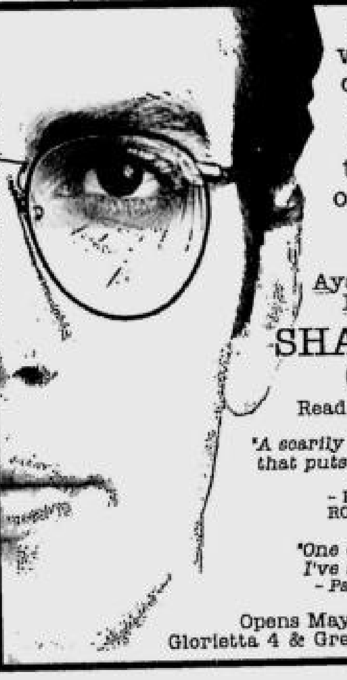
Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS GB4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 GUESS WHO	2 XXX 2	3 THE INTERPRETER	4 CAN THIS BE LOVE
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 GUESS WHO	2 THE WEDDING DATE	3 THX XXX 2 12:05, 2:10, 4:15, 6:20, 8:25, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS	5 SAHARA	6 CAN THIS BE LOVE	7 THE INTERPRETER
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 CAN THIS BE LOVE 12:25, 2:35, 4:45, 6:55, 9:05	2 XXX 2 1:05, 3:15, 5:25, 7:35, 9:45		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX THE INTERPRETER 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX XXX 2 2:40, 4:50, 7:00, 9:10, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 THE WEDDING DATE 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 CAN THIS BE LOVE 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:25, 10:35 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 GUESS WHO 2:20, 4:30, 6:40, 8:50, 11:00 GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX XXX 2	2 CAN THIS BE LOVE		
	3 GUESS WHO	4 THE WEDDING DATE	5 THE INTERPRETER	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 XXX 2	2 BE COOL	3 CAN THIS BE LOVE	4 FINDING NEVERLAND

AYALA CINEMAS

ON MAY 5, BE READY FOR A BRUTAL AWAKENING
SHOWING EXCLUSIVELY AT GLORIETTA 1 CINEMAS
MTRCB Rating Restricted 18 (R-18)


WHAT HAPPENS WHEN DORMANT EMOTIONS EXPLODE INTO AN AWAKENED BRUTALITY?
AN ATO M. BAUSTISTA PICTURE
SA AKING PAGKAKAGISING MULA SA KAMULATAN



On May 4, witness one of the most incredible stories in the history of journalism

An Ayala Cinemas Exclusive

SHATTERED GLASS
Read between the lies.

"A searing compelling thriller that puts journalistic ethics on trial."
- Peter Travers
ROLLING STONE

"One of the best films I've seen this year."
- Paul Clinton, CNN

Opens May 4 only at Glorietta 4 & Greenbelt 3 Cinemas

Customer Service text hotline: 0917 6095900
Customer Service text hotline: Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm
Greenbelt - 752 4853; from 11am to 12mn
Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324

Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729 7777

All-Digital Cinemas

MARKET! MARKET!
The *fun* is in the finds
Developed and managed by Ayala Land, Inc.

Movies are subject to change without prior notice.
Customer Service Hotline: 886-7515

Free Seating Cinemas: P70.00
① The Interpreter
② Wedding Date
③ Sahara
④ Can This Be Love

Guaranteed Seats Cinemas: P90.00
⑤ Ring of Nibelungs
⑥ Guess Who
⑦ XXX 2

EVENTS! EVENTS!

MARKET! MARKET!
The fun is in the finds

ALOHA YO
Featuring music from
Disney's
LILO & STITCH
ISLAND FAVORITES

Catch Lilo's summer musical show featuring Bea Binene as LILO, Chynna Ortaleza and Nadine Samonte as NANI, Dion Ignacio and Tyrone Perez as DAVID, Paul Salas as DANIEL. Plus the SOP Boys Emil and Yexel. Directed by: Freddie Santos.

May 13, 4 pm and 6 pm, Activity Center

Reserved seats on a first-come, first-serve basis for shoppers who present P300 worth of receipts on May 13.

Viewing treats on HBO

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

WE'VE gotten advance word on HBO's movies for May, and we're happy to share these promising finds. Watch out for them:

"About Schmidt": **Jack Nicholson** is betrayed by his wife, so he's down on matrimony. When his daughter decides to get married, Nicholson does everything he can to put a stop to the wedding. May 3, 11:30 a.m.

"Analyze That": The sequel to the hit film "Analyze This," this production brings back mob boss Raul Vitti (**Robert De Niro**) and his reluctant psychotherapist Dr. Ben Sobel (**Billy Crystal**). When Vitti is released from prison, he is turned over to Dr. Sobel's custody and becomes the doctor's houseguest, much to the Sobel's wife's dismay. May 7, 11:35 p.m.

"Babe": A charming fable of an ordinary pig who defies destiny by daring to be, of all things, a sheep dog! Babe learns the art of sheep herding and his farmer-owner enters him in the world sheep dog herding championships. May 9, 9 p.m.

"Batman Forever": Batman (**Val Kilmer**) is back, and he's got double trouble on his hands—Two-Face (**Tommy Lee Jones**) and the Riddler (**Jim Carrey**) team up to terrorize Gotham City and uncover the Caped Crusader's identity. **Nicole Kidman** also stars as Dr. Chase Meridian, and she's powerfully attracted to Batman the moment she meets him. May 27, 9 p.m.

"Catch Me If You Can": Inspired by the true-to-life story of master con man **Frank Abegnale Jr.**, this film directed by **Steven Spielberg** stars **Leonardo DiCaprio** as a brilliant forger and master of deception. **Tom Hanks** plays the FBI agent who chases him all over the United States and Europe. May 7, 1:45 p.m.

"Clueless": Directed by **Amy Heekerling**, this smart and funny movie stars **Alicia Silverstone** as ditzy Cher, her best friend Dionne, and Tai (**Britanny Murphy**), the frumpy new student they transform into a blonde bombshell. May 12, 8:55 a.m.

"Disclosure": A happily married executive (**Michael Douglas**) finds himself fighting for both his professional and personal life after he's accused of sexual harassment by his new boss—and old flame (**Demi Moore**). May 21, 12:35 p.m.

"Frances": About film star **Frances Farmer**, whose high-fighting career is compromised by alcohol dependency and mental instability. Once in a mental institution, she is abused, arbitrarily lobotomized, and raped. The film star **Jessica Lange** and **Sam Shepard**. May 11, 10:25 a.m.

'Miracle'

CELINE **Dion**'s soaring vocals and **Anne Geddes**' stunning photographic images celebrating birth and life fuse beautifully together in the new "Miracle" album. It's available starting on Mother's Day (May 8) on CDs, cassettes and special limited edition CD and DVD pack with a 42-page mini booklet showcasing Geddes' astounding photographs.

'Exposed'

ASIAN superstar **Coco Lee** returns with her second full-length album in English, "Exposed." She worked on the new album with **Ric Wake** and his award-winning production team, responsible for some of the hits of **Jennifer Lopez, Celine Dion** and **Mariah Carey**.

For every purchase of an "Exposed" CD, you will receive a free St. Ives Invigorating Apricot Scrub or Collagen Elastin Bodywash-and-Lotion-in-One sachet, at selected Odyssey, Tower Records, Music One, Astroplus, Astrovision and Radio City outlets until May 9, or until supply lasts.

'The Massacre'

CURTIS **Jackson** aka 50 Cent has released the new album, "The Massacre," with 21 tracks that expand the parameters of hardcore rap. Cuts include "Gatman and Robbin" with Eminem, "Build You Up" with **Jamie Foxx**, and "My Toy Soldier" with **Tony Yayo**. Plus: "Disco Inferno," "Candy Shop," "Piggy Bank" and "Talkin' 'Bout Me."

'Ammo'

FROM MCA Music, "Ammo" is a collection of poprock hits including July 4 Kings' "New Black Car" and "Normal Life," Dishwalla's "Once in a While," and Gigolo Aunts' "Everyone Can Fly."

The 19-track album also features Lifehouse's "Sick Cycle Carousel" and "Hanging by A Moment," and 3 Doors Down's "Be Like That."

'Rebirth'

WITH the No. 2 debut of her new album "Rebirth" on the US top 200 chart, Jennifer Lopez has become only the third female artist to have her first five albums debut in the Top 10 (the others are **Britney Spears** and **LeAnn Rimes**).

The album features an audio CD and DVD featuring a behind-the-scenes documentary on the making of "Rebirth" and Lopez's videos, including the No. 1 hit "Get It Right," and the equally successful follow-up track with **Fat Joe**, "Hold You Down."

WHEN 'NORMAL' IS NOT

After 25 years of marriage, Roy Applewood, a Midwestern factory worker, stuns his community by revealing he wants a sex-change surgery. His wife Irma kicks him out. But as his transition to being a woman begins, Roy and Irma discover that love transcends gender. "Normal," starring Jessica Lange and Tom Wilkinson, premieres tonight at 9:55 on HBO.

Is there life for 'The Simpsons' after the 350th episode today?

LOS ANGELES—When a show reaches an impressive 350 episodes, it's fair to reflect on its mortality. So how long can "The Simpsons," which hits the milestone today, keep going?

Longevity

"I don't see any end in sight," creator and executive producer Matt Groening told The Associated Press.

Those are reassuring words for the millions of fans who have remained loyal to the Simpson family through 16 seasons, and counting. Writers are already at work on episodes for 2005-06, the 17th season.

The key to its longevity is simple, Groening said: "We try to keep surprising the audience."

Executive producer Al Jean, who has been with the animated comedy since 1989, muses about other aspects of the equation.

With the ensemble cast signed through the next three seasons, "I would consider it highly likely we will do those seasons," Jean said.

The series features the voices of Dan Castellaneta and Julie Kavner as parents Homer and Marge Simpson; Nancy Cartwright as son Bart, and Yeardley Smith as daughter Lisa.

"The Simpsons" has held steady with just under 10 million weekly viewers for years.

In today's 350th episode (Sunday in the United States), Ray Romano is heard as the voice of Homer's new best friend, a roofer.

Going for 366

Although "The Simpsons" has logged the most seasons of any TV sitcom, it has yet to match the episode count of two others: "The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet," which holds the record at 435 episodes, and "My Three Sons" with 380.

A wry Groening said he's set his own dream goal.

"I want to get to 366 so we have one for every day of the year, including leap year." AP

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GUESS WHO PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:15	XXX 2: THE NEXT LEVEL PG13 12:15,2:40,5:05,7:30,10:00	THE INTERPRETER PG13 12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:20
CANTHIS BE LOVE GP 12:40,3:00,5:20,7:40,10:00	WEDDING DATE PG13 1:00,3:00,5:00,7:00,9:00	XXX 2:THE NEXT LEVEL PG13 12:50,3:15,5:40,8:05,10:30

Items that tell a story...

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OPENS TOMORROW

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BASED ON A TRUE STORY

ON November 13, 1973, police received a frantic phone call that led them to a nightmarish crime scene at the Defeo residence in Amityville, Long Island - an entire family had been murdered in their beds while they slept. The murderer, Ronald Defeo confessed to killing his parents and four siblings, saying "demonic spirits" in the house possessed him and drove him to the massacre.

One year later, the new house owners, George and Kathy Lutz and their children moved into the house thinking it would be their dream home.

What happened next inside this haunted house will shock you to no end.

28 days after moving in, the Lutzes abandoned the residence-lucky to escape with their lives. THIS IS THEIR TRUE STORY.

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ENTERTAINMENT

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

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Ticket sales were low, but Boyz II Men could do no wrong onstage

REVIEW

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

FRIDAY night outside the PSC Multipurpose Arena in Pasig, where a twice-postponed concert featuring Boyz II Men was finally pushing through, scalpers were having a hard time selling tickets even at half price.

Inside the venue, concert production staff allowed people at the bleachers and upper boxes to come down and occupy the more expensive seats. In the VIP section, Boyz II Men fans, including Aiko Melendez and her date, were probably wondering why.

Invigorating

Was it right to surmise that Boyz II Men is now really over the hill, when in fact it was the most famous R&B act of the 1990s? Time was when the group's string of hits, syrupy romantic ballads delivered in mellifluous four-part harmony, could melt one to tears. But 15 years later and on their second trip to the Philippines, it seemed like Boyz II Men was ripe for retirement.

Onstage however, the group's three remaining members could do no wrong. Opening with a set of upbeat numbers, they looked and sounded as invigorating as the hottest black vocal artists that successfully updated the vintage doo-wop style of the '50s, complemented by New Jack Swing choreography.

The latest Boyz II Men CD ("Throwback"), released only last year, was panned for its interpretation of all-covers material that made the group "sound like a parody of their old selves." But at the concert, hearing Boyz II Men perform songs originally made popular by the Stylistics, Hall & Oates and the Isley Brothers, among others, added more life to the audience.

And when it was time to sing their own "classics," Boyz II Men was poised to melt hearts again—each one of them with a bunch of roses to throw into the open arms of screaming women who suddenly swarmed the foot of the stage holding up mobile phone cameras on capture mode.

"I'll make love to you," the tune went, sending the girls into fits of frenzy. When the song "Mama" was introduced as something we should sing to our mothers, one female fan was so overcome with emotion that she handed over her cell phone for one of the Boyz to serenade her own mom, who was presumably on the other end of the line.

Sour note

A sour note to the entire performance was the rather sharp decibels of the audio system, in which the minus-one backing tracks tended to drown out the voices of Boyz II Men. Otherwise we could've enjoyed more the harmonics and counterpoint nuances of the falsettos and bass parts that the group has always been known for.

On hindsight, the gig would've been better off in a smaller venue. It was really like a club act. Had it been held, say, at Hard Rock Café, Boyz II Men could've packed in the crowds even for three straight nights.

That way, there would've been no need to hire a combined GMA/ABS-CBN roster of talents who—with the exception of Sheryl Regis who used her *provinciana* charm and vocal prowess to good measure—were out of place as front acts.

> The gig may have been better off in a much smaller venue, which the group would have packed, say, three nights in a row

TV ratings showdown pumps up Cebu City

By Connie E. Fernandez
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Cebuanos had never seen so many stars in one weekend.

The brightest stars of network giants GMA 7 and ABS-CBN descended on the Queen City of the South to woo and win over the Cebuanos in the ratings game.

At least 100 stars and news personalities of GMA Network arrived in Cebu on Friday for the "Kapusong Cebuano Weekend." Not to be outdone, ABS-CBN brought its "Kapamilya" stars for the "Daghang Salamat Cebu," the Cebu leg of its summer caravan.

No coincidence

Sunday is normally a slow day here, but passenger jeepneys were full and traffic was heavy, especially on the streets leading to the Cebu City Sports Complex, Ayala Center Cebu and Plaza Independencia where GMA and ABS-CBN held their shows.

Was it mere coincidence?

Felipe Gozon, GMA president and chief executive officer, did not think so. He told a news conference on Friday that they had long planned the two-day event, and that the allocation for it had been revised several times because he had found "obscene" the initial budget of more than P40 million.

But when they heard that ABS-CBN had set a similar activity on the same day, Gozon pulled all the stops.

Tapings in Manila were packed up and the stars were told to proceed to Cebu.

However, Gozon admitted that he did not expect ABS-CBN to meet them head-on in Cebu, where the rival network was ahead in the ratings.

Charo Santos-Concio, executive vice president for television and entertainment, said the event had long been planned as part of its "Kapamilya Summer Caravan."

The Northern Luzon leg was held last month. After Cebu, next stops are Iloilo and Davao.

Concio said the show was the company's way of thanking Cebuanos for making ABS-CBN No. 1 in the province.

Chit Guerrero, vice president for projects and regional network group, maintained that the simultaneous events were just a coincidence.

"Okay *lang*. It's a big place," she told the INQUIRER.

Gozon admitted that GMA was behind ABS-CBN in the Cebu ratings as "almost the same ratio as we were ahead in Mega Manila."

He cited results of an in-house survey showing that 70 percent of the Cebuanos were not aware that GMA programs were top raters in Mega Manila.

"We believe that if we can increase the awareness of the Cebuanos regarding our top programs in Mega Manila, most of our Kapusong Cebuano will watch those programs," he said.

That, he noted, was the aim of the two-day event.

In the meantime, the battle, as it were, left Cebuanos star-struck.

On Saturday, many people spilled onto the streets for the networks' separate motorcades.

GMA's News and Public Affairs news anchors led by Mel Tiangco and Mike Enriquez held the "Serbisyong Totoo Day" at the SM Cebu Trade Hall where Cebuanos were treated to games and public service, including free overseas calls, a medical mission and art workshops.

Stars of the ABS-CBN soaps and variety shows met fans at the malls.

Even remote areas

On Sunday, "Grand Kapuso Fans' Day" was held at Cebu City Sports Complex, kicked off with a fun run. "SOP" and "S-Files" were aired live from there at the sports complex run by the city government.

ABS-CBN Sunday shows were mounted in two remote areas in the city—"ASAP," "Search for the Star in a Million" and "Kapamilya Concert Party" at the Ayala Center parking lot, and "ASAP Fanatic" and "The Buzz" at the Plaza Independencia.

On Monday, ABS-CBN's "Magandang Umaga Bayan" and "Breakfast" went live at Plantation Bay and "M.R.S." was held at Tambuli Beach, both on Mactan Island.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE
Tuesday, May 3, 2005

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9PM SABADO SABAGO!
ABC

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Showbiz No. 1 (4:25 PM)	Yu-Gi-Oh! (5:10 PM)	Naruto (5:35 PM)	Vidjoking	TV Patrol World		Kamao	Hiram	Spirits	Memories Of Bali	Stained Glass	Bora			Insider
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	EZ Shop	Anime Ring Kaisho				Sentro	Lizzie Mcguire	Three Blind Dates		Wow Mali		Big News	The Probe Team Documentaries		Billboard On-Air	
GMA 7		Saang Sulok Ng Langit	Now and Forever	Glass Shoes	One Piece	Hungry Heart	Knockout	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Darna	All About Eve (8:45PM)	Full House (9:15PM)		Bahay Mo Ba 'To?			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Score Tactics	The Ring	Cold Cases		Medium		Cold Case		Newswatch Now	Tuesday Night Treat		
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		The Hope 1-Million All Filipino		Billiards Open	2005 Japan 9-Ball Festival		IBC News Tonite	Up Close And Personal	
JackTV		Wwe Raw				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Maxsiel	Dungeons And Dragons	Stargate SG1		Soldier Of Fortune		RHD/LA		The Wire		Oz	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Rugrats	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix						Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Top Of The Pops	MYX Ramalan	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Good Morning Miami	Knock First	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Eliminidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	JKX	Simple Life	One Tree Hill		Temptation Island		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
Studio 23				PBL Game 2				Ragnarok	Project Arms	Wazzup Wazzup	Angel			Smallville		News Central	Oprah		The Men's Room
AXN		CSI: Miami		CSI: Miami		Fear Factor (Season V)		7 Days (Season III)		Alias (Season III)		Ripley's Believe It or Not		CSI: NY (Season I)		The Amazing Race 7		AXN Shakedown	
Star World	Frasier	The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	Charmed		Wild Card		Miss Match		Friends	Charmed
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic		Air Crash Investigation		Seconds From Disaster		Interpol Investigates		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr. Brady Barr	Wow		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Air Crash Investigation: Deadly Delay/Amazon Claws		Seconds From Disaster	
Solar Sports													NBA TV Daily	NBA Playoffs First Round					Destination Finals
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Passion For Dessert	Second Look		Look For Less	Life & Style		Clean House		Road & Track	Back To Basics
HBO		Short Circuit			The Monster Squad (4:45 PM)			Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade (6:15 PM)					Street Fighter - The Ultimate Battle (8:20 PM)			Six Feet Under 40: The Dare		Normal (10:55PM)	
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	The Woody Woodpecker Show	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Mucha Lucha!	X-Men Evolution	Static Shock	Gundam Wing	Shaman King	Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Dexter's Laboratory	Time Squad	Thundercats	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Gundam Seed
ESPN				Winter X Games IX-Day2 Pt2 Mt. Aspen Co.USA															
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	The Sleepover Club	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Buzz Lightyear Of Star Command	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	House Of Mouse	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	America's Funniest Home Video	According To Jim	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax	Gotcha!			Stranger At The Door (4:15 PM)				Tempo			Weekend War			The Wisher			Berserker: Hell's Warrior (10:25PM)		
Hallmark Channel	Who's The Boss	Just Cause		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Mad About You	Who's The Boss	Bewitched	The District		Just Cause					Missing (10:35PM)		The District (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Civilizations				Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Rides		Human Discovery		Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Science Mysteries	
NBN		Taiwan Winner TV Shopping		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision		MMDA On The Road		Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Family Rosary Crusade		Paco Park Presents		Auto Focus	

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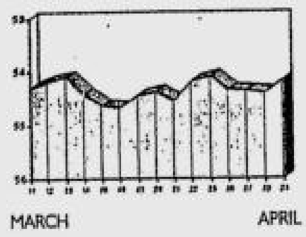


P54.16 = $1

As of 5 p.m., April 29, 2005

Y105.87 = $1

As of 5 p.m., April 28, 2005

GOLD: $432.80-433.30

per ounce Hong Kong April 29, 2005

May 2, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.775434	1.000000	54.3540
Japan	Yen	0.007312	0.009430	0.5126
United Kingdom	Pound	1.478210	1.906300	103.6150
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.099430	0.128225	6.9695
Switzerland	Franc	0.650096	0.838364	45.5684
Canada	Dollar	0.619703	0.799169	43.4380
Singapore	Dollar	0.471217	0.607681	33.0299
Australia	Dollar	0.604156	0.779120	42.3483
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.056964	2.652661	144.1827
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.206783	0.266667	14.4944
Brunei	Dollar	0.469789	0.605840	32.9298
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000081	0.000104	0.0057
Thailand	Baht	0.019567	0.025233	1.3715
UAE	Dirham	0.211134	0.272279	14.7995
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.289600	70.0949
Argentina	Peso	0.267161	0.344531	18.7266
Brazil	Real	0.307103	0.396040	21.5264
Denmark	Kroner	0.134304	0.173199	9.4141
India	Rupee	0.017753	0.022894	1.2444
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.204089	0.263193	14.3056
Mexico	New Peso	0.069531	0.089667	4.8738
New Zealand	Dollar	0.564691	0.728226	39.5820
Korea	Won	0.000774	0.000998	0.0542
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024758	0.031928	1.7354

STOCK MARKET

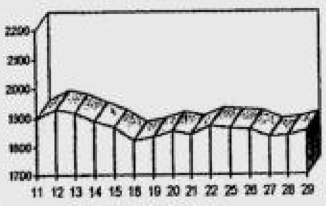
Bargain hunting seen

SHARE prices are expected to get a lift from bargain-hunters as many issues seemed to have reached bottom, analysts said.

Financial markets were closed yesterday for a special non-working holiday. Trading resumes today.

"We may even see a rally (this week)," said Eagle Equities Inc. president Joey Roxas.

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance has urged other government agencies to conduct an anti-corruption campaign of their own to make holistic the government's renewed crackdown on dishonest public employees and officials.

The DOF advised in particular the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC), head agency of the Land Transportation Office (LTO), to establish a program against corrupt workers.

The LTO is one government agency perceived to be home to some corrupt employees asking for grease money to fast-track public transactions usually related to vehicle registration and applications for driver's licenses.

"We urge the DOTC to take a close look at the units under them. Cleansing of the government should not only be limited to the Ombudsman," Finance Undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan said.

The DOF earlier announced that it would begin this month an anti-corruption program that would cover agencies under its umbrella, notably the bureaus of Internal Revenue, of Customs, and of Local Government Finance where city and municipal treasurers work under.

Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said that under the anti-corruption program, the DOF targets to file graft and corruption charges every two weeks against erring officials and employees working for agencies attached to the DOF.

Under the new program, the Revenue Integrity Protection Service (RIPS), the DOF unit tasked with conducting lifestyle checks among state workers under its watch, commits to revitalize the government's anti-corruption drive by charging more crooks in public service.

PURISIMA

Purisima said the anti-corruption campaign was aimed at complementing the recently launched RATE (run after tax evaders) program of the DOF and the BIR. Under the RATE, the two government agencies file charges every week against tax-delinquent members of the private sector. With the two programs, the DOF hopes to curb the culture of dishonesty both in the private and public sectors.

The suggestion for the DOTC to come up with an anti-corruption campaign of its own came after the DOF was questioned for limiting its planned anti-corruption campaign to the BIR, BOC and the BLGF.

Bonoan explained that the DOF had no authority to conduct an anti-corruption campaign against employees or officials of the LTO and other agencies not attached to it.

Earlier, the government was found to have lost huge revenues due to the non-payment of taxes on vehicle insurance.

The non-payment could either be due to under-declaration by insurance firms of the actual amount of insurance premiums they sold, possibly in connivance with LTO workers, or due to the sale of fake insurance premiums by unscrupulous traders.

The Insurance Commission earlier said there were more than

MAJOR/B2

SEC looks into Pacific Plans case

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission (SEC) is not ruling out possible sanctions on pre-need firm Pacific Plans Inc. (PPI) as it prepares its comments on the company's plan to suspend payments.

Recently appointed Commission Secretary Gerard Lukban said the SEC was trying to leave no stone unturned on PPI's case.

In a statement yesterday, PPI said the company had to spin off its 34,000 open-ended plans to make sure its more than 400,000 fixed-value plans would remain healthy.

PPI's open-ended plans had been bleeding the company because of soaring tuition fees after the full deregulation of tuition increases in 1990.

SEC/B4

DOF cool to exempting wage earners from tax

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance is cool to the proposal of exempting minimum wage earners from income tax, a move estimated to cost the government P5.6 billion in revenues.

Finance Undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan said President Macapagal-Arroyo's directive for a pay increase among minimum wage earners was already a sufficient move on the part of the government to help them cope with rising prices.

"If there will be a wage hike, then we (DOF) don't see the point of exempting them from the tax," he said in a phone interview.

He added that the National Internal Revenue Code (NIRC) already gives tax-exempt privileges to low-income earners. Under the NIRC, individuals acting as head of a family are allowed to deduct a maximum of P32,000 from their gross income to determine their taxable income. The amount is on top of the deductible P8,000 for each of the individual's dependents.

Another finance official explained that exempting minimum wage earners from the income tax would run counter to the government's current efforts to raise more revenues to address a lingering fiscal problem.

The official said discussing exemption from the income tax was not timely, considering that the government was still struggling to have the VAT (value-added tax) bill passed.

DOF/B4

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Marubeni bags ₱220-M transmission line project

By Abigail L. Ho

THE BOARD of National Transmission Corp. (Transco) has awarded to Marubeni Corp. the contract for the construction of the P220-million San Roque-San Manuel line to allow the full dispatch of electricity from the San Roque hydropower facility in Pangasinan.

Transco president and chief executive Alan Ortiz said the contract award effectively allowed the state firm to avoid having to pay contractual obligations worth P17 million a day.

He said these obligations were fixed cost penalties that Transco would have had to pay if the 345-megawatt (MW) San Roque plant could not be dispatched at its nominated capacity of 83 MW.

The recently awarded contract would entail the construction of a dedicated 10-kilometer, 230-kilovolt transmission line that will allow the full or near-full capacity dispatch of the San Roque power facility.

This line will likewise connect the hydropower facility to the Luzon grid.

Ortiz said the new dedicated line would take about six months to complete.

The San Roque-San Manuel line is seen to drive down the cost of power generated by the San Roque facility, at least for the electricity beyond the 83-MW nominated capacity.

A Transco official said power outside of the nominated capacity from the San Roque facility could be sold at P1.50 per kilowatt-hour (kWh).

However, since the San Roque facility was hydro in nature, he said production beyond the nominated capacity would not be very feasible in the summer months.

The dedicated transmission line for the San Roque power project is part of Transco's Luzon Island Transmission Augmentation Program or Project Lista.

The San Manuel-San Roque line is one of the short-term solutions under Project Lista.

Another recently completed part of Project Lista's short-term plans was the upgrading of the Biñan-Dasmariñas transmission line, which allowed the higher dispatch of Manila Electric Co. independent power producers Sta. Rita and San Lorenzo facilities.

The higher IPP dispatch resulted in a reduction in Meralco charges by 37.5 centavos per kWh.

Major

From page B1

4 million vehicles registered with the LTO last year. With the figure, the Insurance Commission said, the amount of insurance premiums collected by the non-life insurance industry from vehicles should be about P5 billion. But the industry reported that it sold only P2.5 billion worth of vehicle insurance premiums.

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Prof. Bernardo has worked with companies engaged in manufacturing, construction, insurance, banking and agriculture, as well as with government agencies and educational institutions. He was co-founder and partner of the Asian Consulting and Training Group, Inc.

Prof. Rene T. Domingo is a teacher, writer, and management consultant. He is the Sime Darby Professor of Manufacturing at the Asian Institute of Management in Manila and the program director of its Advanced Manufacturing Management Course. Schooled and trained in Japan, he has written quality and service management and world-class manufacturing practices. He trains and consults for a number of Asian companies in the field of total quality management, business process engineering and lean manufacturing. He has done research on the operations of Japanese joint venture companies in Southeast Asia.

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NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

To All PICPA Members:

In accordance with the provision of Article XII, Section I of the By-Laws of the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants, notice is hereby given that the Special Meeting of Members will be held on Friday, June 10, 2005 at 6:00 p.m., Mediterranean Room, Waterfront Hotel & Casino, Lahug, Cebu City, purposely to present for approval the amendments to the By-Laws of the Institute in compliance with the provisions of The Accountancy Law of 2004, Republic Act No. 9298 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Proof of Required Notice of Meeting
3. Determination of Quorum
4. Approval of the Agenda
5. President's Report
6. Presentation of the amended By-Laws of PICPA in compliance with the requirements of the R.A. No. 9298 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations
7. Approval of the amended By-Laws
8. Adjournment

We urge all members to attend this Special Meeting of Members. If you cannot be present in person during the meeting, please accomplish and return to us the attached general proxy form. (Copies of the proxy form may be obtained through the local chapter or at http://www.picpa.com.ph.)

Antonio V. Cruz
National Secretary

Japan firm wins Cebu-Negros submarine cable deal worth $26M

By Abigail L. Ho

NATIONAL Transmission Corp. (Transco) has awarded a $26-million submarine cable contract to Kanematsu Corp. of Japan for the Cebu-Negros component of the $40-million Cebu-Negros-Panay (CNP) interconnection project.

Transco president and chief executive Alan Ortiz said the submarine cables should be in place by next year. He said the awarding of the overhead line component to be decided in the next Transco board meeting.

With the recent award of the submarine cable contract and the impending award of the overhead line deal, Ortiz said the entire project should be completed by late 2006 or early 2007.

Under the CNP interconnection and capacity expansion project, the Cebu-Negros and Negros-Panay lines' capacity to transmit power between the Visayas islands will be doubled, from 100 megawatts (MW) to 200 MW, upon completion.

The project completion will likewise optimize the utilization of indigenous power from geothermal energy-endowed Leyte and offer a medium-term solution to the looming power crisis in the Visayas.

The Cebu-Negros component covers the installation of a 109-kilometer, 138-kilovolt (kV) overhead transmission line and a 17.8-km sub-sea cable connecting Transco's Santander substation in Cebu and the Amlan substation in Negros Oriental.

The Negros-Panay component will double the transfer capacity of the 18.8-km sub-sea cable from 100 MW to 200 MW.

Apart from the CNP project, Transco is also working on other projects that will ensure adequate supply of electricity in the power-hungry Visayas region.

Cables for the Leyte-Cebu interconnection project were delivered yesterday and would be laid down Wednesday this week. This will take about a week to complete and upon completion, Ortiz said continuous testing would be done on the lines to ensure that there would be no glitches in power delivery.

The P3.7-billion Leyte-Cebu interconnection uprating project will double the existing line's 200-MW capacity to deliver power to the CNP grid.

It entails the construction of an additional 32 circuit-kilometers of 230-kV submarine cables and another 150-megavolt-ampere substation capacity.

New RP-UAE air deal sought

By Clarissa S. Batino

DUBAI-BASED carrier Emirates wants to double its flight frequency between the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates to keep up with increasing demand.

Emirates presently flies to Manila 10 times a week.

Emirates executive vice president Ghaith Al Ghaith urged the Philippine government to expand its air services agreement with the United Arab Emirates to enable the airline mount more flights to the Philippines.

"We want to at least double our current capacity in the Philippines in the next five years," Ghaith told reporters during an interview in Dubai on Wednesday following the announcement of the airline's financial performance for the fiscal year ending March 31.

State-owned Emirates announced a net profit of $708 million for April 2004 to March 2005, up 49 percent from the previous year. Of the total, $637 million came from its passenger airline business and the rest from air cargo, tourism and leisure, bus and hotel businesses.

Emirates chair Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum said the airline achieved its fastest growth in profit amid rising fuel costs, increasing competition in the aviation industry and other challenges, including the impact of the killer tsunami that hit Asia in late 2004.

Emirates' existing allocation for the Philippine-UAE flights are fully utilized. It is also using five of Philippine Airlines' allocations to Dubai.

The Dubai carrier is also considering flying to other airports in the country such as Clark, Cebu and Davao when these destinations become economically feasible, according to Ghaith.

"At the moment, there is no compelling evidence that operations to any of these airports can be sustainable. We will, in the meantime, focus on expanding our operations in Manila," said Ghaith.

The biggest market for the Philippine-Dubai flights are Filipinos who work in the Middle East. There are more than 1 million Filipinos working in the Middle East and of this, about 200,000 are in the seven emirates comprising UAE.

Ghaith said Dubai, alone, would need a huge number of work force from the Philippines.

"There is huge opportunity for Emirates to expand its operations in the Philippines because Dubai needs skillful staff to manage the operations of a lot of businesses and infrastructure projects there," he added.

Given this, Ghaith said there was an urgent need for the Philippines and UAE to review their air services agreement which was signed in March 2003.

Emirates, he said, had been constantly communicating with Philippine aviation officials on the issue but there had been no response yet.

Ghaith said he was hoping that a new round of bilateral air talks between the Philippines and the UAE could be held this year.

Dubai, he explained, follows an open skies policy, which meant that limitations on flights were solely coming from its counterparts.

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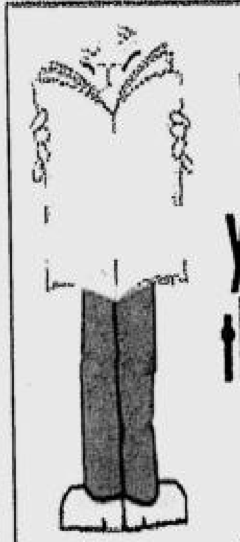

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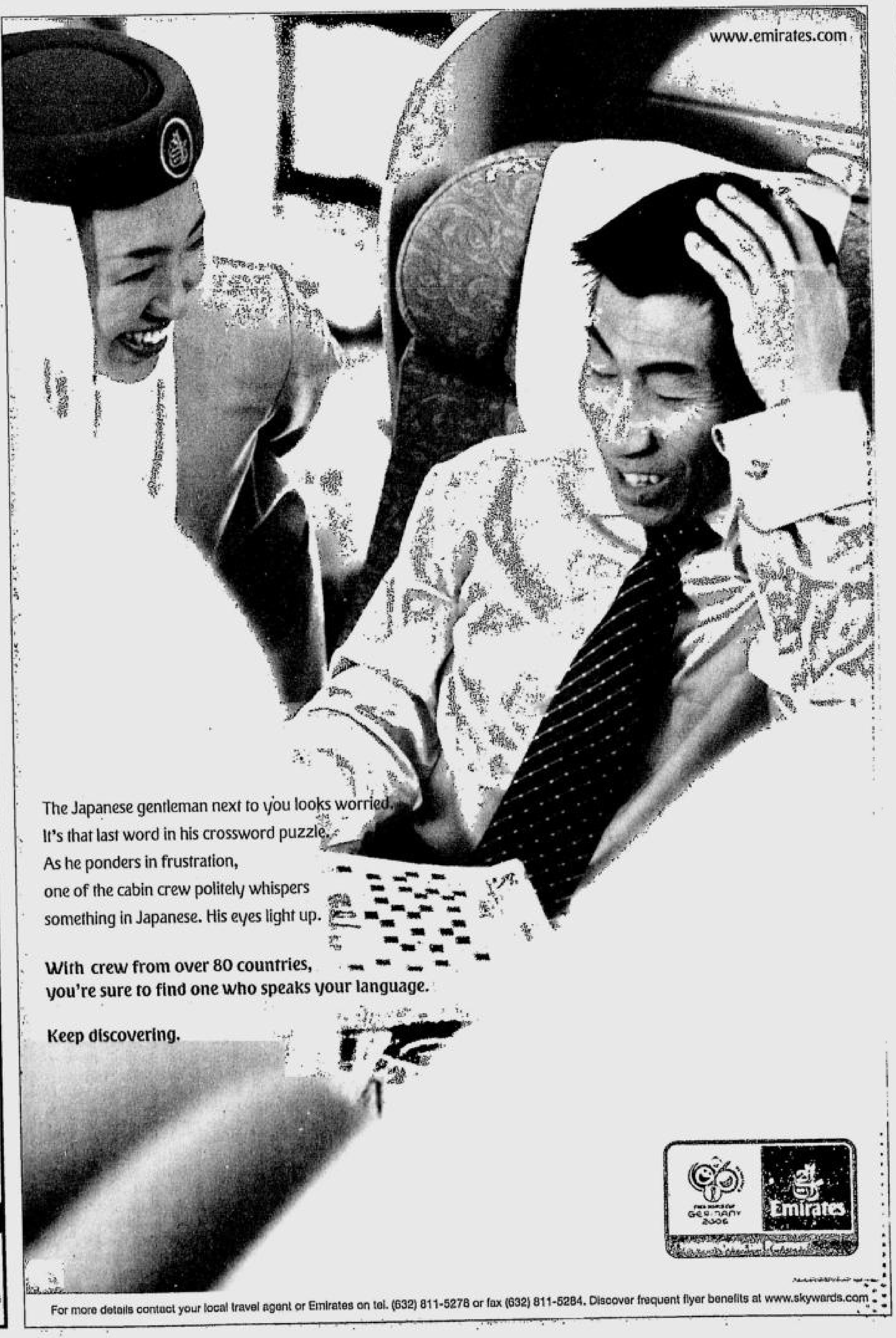

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BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

WITH the election of a new Pope in record time (i.e. fast), I am sure that most of you are now really excited about news from our hard-working pork ... *este*, Congress *pala*.

As everybody in business knows, our Congress is burning all its fat, working hard on a bill that will expand the coverage of the VAT (value-added tax)—also in record time (i.e. slow).

And so I am happy to report that, a few weeks after they agreed to hurry up the VAT bill, the bicameral committee is still caught in a stunning deadlock.

Bogging down the bicameral committee is that difficult portion of the bill seeking to impose the famous VAT on electricity.

While both chambers of Congress were still deliberating the bill, not a few in the business sector already warned against that exact imposition of VAT on power.

As a "solution" to the monstrous money problems of this cute administration of Gloriaetta, the VAT on power would, in fact, create even bigger problems.

So what kind of a solution is that? It's like getting rid of your headache by cutting off your head. Which is not a bad idea for our lawmakers, actually.

* * *

ANYWAY, despite all that protest from the business sector, both chambers of Congress passed separate bills with different provisions for the power VAT.

What was behind such intransigence, nobody could still say up to now. Although many believe that our lawmakers are actually not really that stupid.

But then again...

And now, as if to raise our level of excitement further, they are still fighting over their own versions in the bicameral committee.

There are nine senators in the committee. From what I heard, they are divided into two camps, and neither side is willing to give an inch.

It only means that, without a new tax measure, nobody is going to give us a second look for any investment. Not even for making *pakong bakya*—okay!

And so the House panel heroically passed on the blame to the senators. The congressmen told media that, actually, the House panel was solid.

As if to tell us that their being "solid" was the definitive step in the right direction, the congressmen nevertheless were not clear on what, exactly, they were solidly behind.

I don't know if they are just waiting for a huge tip in the right direction of their pockets, but for all you know, they were probably solidly behind our castration.

* * *

IN THEIR present form, both versions of the VAT bill from the House and the Senate can cost us an arm and a leg, plus our manhood.

Depending on the version, the bill imposes 10 or 12 percent VAT on power, which can raise electricity rates by 55 centavos per kilowatthour easily.

That's bad for the consumers (i.e. votes).

It seems that our lawmakers saw the implication of the power VAT. As a bright solution, they agreed that the power on VAT should be imposed only on business.

Residential users would still be exempted from VAT. Fine! In other words, the power VAT would only be bad for business. Factories would likely close down.

But then somebody raised the point that, since it is business that gives salary to the consumers, the power VAT on business is bad for the consumers ultimately.

And so our lawmakers came up with another bright solution: Nobody would pay for the power VAT, and it would be charged on the power companies.

They nevertheless forgot to say how, with the government control over power rates, the power companies would earn all the money to pay for the VAT.

* * *

LATELY, Senate President Franklin Drilon put a new twist in the VAT plot. He was trying to convince the bicameral committee to remove the power VAT altogether, maybe for the simple reason that it was actually a stupid idea in the first place.

Drilon warned that the VAT on electricity, if certain lawmakers would insist on imposing it, would lead to certain financial ruin for the government and, thus, the country.

Unfortunately, the position of Drilon was already defeated in the Senate. The Senate version contained the 10 percent VAT on power, plus the "no pass through," which means the power companies would have to pay for the new tax.

It was, however, a close contest. The "no-VAT-on-power" position, even with the senate president espousing it, lost in a floor vote of 11 to 9.

Still, nobody can say, with the defeat of the "no VAT on power," if Drilon can stay on as senate president. It is also not clear whether or not the fight over the VAT bill was an extension of the fight for the senate presidency between Drilon and Sen. Manuel Villar.

* * *

UP TO now, Drilon is trying to catch the last trip in the bicameral committee, sending out press statements, calling on the committee members to keep the exemption of electricity from VAT.

Drilon, actually, is correct. The power VAT will be damaging to the finances of the government, which means that it will be bad for the whole country.

Not that the feared debacle will happen during the watch of this cute administration of Gloriaetta, besieged as it already is. And that's why it resorts to popular measures, such as keeping the subsidy on power, and announcing wage increase on Labor Day, while thousands were marching in the streets.

Drilon probably wants to rally his troops to what is the right thing to do, with or without Villar breathing down his neck. This time, Drilon is foregoing politics to do what is right for us. I just thought I should give the man a hug for it!

* * *

SURELY, everybody in Congress agreed that the VAT on power would have the effect of castrating us, the consumers, because aside from the VAT causing our electric bills to rise, it also could trigger mass layoffs as factories would close down due to costly power bills.

Not a few industry groups already warned that they would close shop here as a result of the power VAT. The electronics sector, for instance, warned that it would move elsewhere, possibly to China, to avoid the power VAT.

Now the electronics sector only earns for this country about $28 billion a year, or about 60 percent of our total exports.

Moreover, Sen. Mar Roxas named seven other industries that are heavy users of power—such as steel, cement and petrochemical—which are only basic industries that any country needs, particularly poor countries like ours.

Most probably, our brave lawmakers also agreed to such an assessment of the business experts. The power VAT, indeed, would be bad for the industries.

And so, as I said, they invited the "no pass through" provision. Just tax the freaking power plants! Fine, from now on, let's also say good-bye to future power plants!

* * *

AS DRILON has been saying all along, due to the power VAT, this cute administration of Gloriaetta might have to cough out more money that what the VAT could generate for the national coffers.

The latest estimate was some loose change of only P1.5 trillion!

You see, under the contracts of the government owned Napocor with the power generation companies, any major change in the government policies on power entitles the power producers to ask Napocor to buy out their contracts.

All in all, those contracts can reach about $40, maybe $50, billion.

But what if Napocor refuses to buy out the contracts? Well, we get it from the international financial community. Those power producers will ask for a contract buyout, precisely because their creditors abroad will likely call in their loans.

Any major change in government policy on power, according to their loan covenants, all those billions of dollars in loans that were used to build the power plants, well, would become due and demandable.

Even congressmen were probably aware of such a consequence of the "no pass through" VAT. The House version seems to recognize it. To address the problem, the bill stated, "specific provisions in contracts that are contrary to the implementation of this law are hereby declare null and void."

So nowadays they can nullify contracts just like that?

Legal row stalls port firm activities

By Abigail L. Ho and Clarissa S. Batino

HARBOUR Centre Port Terminal is hoping to double the volume of cargo it will be handling this year, but an impending legal tussle may prevent the Philippine Ports Authority from allowing the port operator to fully conduct commercial operations.

According to Oscar Sevilla, PPA general manager, based on the review of PPA's contract with the International Container Terminal Services Inc., containerized cargo operations at the Port of Manila was exclusive to ICTSI.

The Office of the Government Corporate Counsel issued an opinion bolstering ICTSI's claim. The OGCC cited the exclusivity provision in ICTSI's contract with the PPA over the handling of containerized cargo, Sevilla said in a recent interview.

"When the bidding [for port development] was conducted, no one was developing the port, so we have to protect that contract also," Sevilla said. "This is not my decision to make but for the whole PPA board. Congress also wants to know the PPA's stand in this."

Sevilla said a decision would be made during the PPA's regular monthly meeting.

The matter had actually been under discussion since the time of former PPA general manager Alfonso Cusi, but a decision was never finalized, he added.

Even before the PPA board meeting, however, Sevilla showed no real inclination to allow Harbour Centre to launch full commercial containerized operations in the Port of Manila.

"The existing contract (with ICTSI) is protected by the Constitution, so we can't really do anything about it," he said.

Also, Harbour Centre only paid the PPA P20,000 in fees each year, he said. If the port operator would be allowed to conduct full commercial containerized operations, it should be paying much more than that.

Sevilla said bulk of the PPA's annual income came from remittances from ICTSI and South Harbor operator Asian Terminals Inc.

If Harbour Centre expects to be afforded the same rights as ICTSI and ATI, the port operator must also pay the corresponding dues, he said.

"We're trying to encourage private ports, but we also have contracts that we have to protect," Sevilla said.

Harbour Centre Port Terminal, which is controlled by the family of Reghis Romero, expects to double the volume of cargo it would handle this to about 4 million metric tons.

Tricia Sandejas, head of business development and corporate communication, said that in 2004, the port facility handled about 2 million of bulk and break bulk cargoes.

Customs Commissioner Alberto Lina said that the port accounts for 20 to 25 percent of the collection of the Manila Port area, which in turn accounts for 35 percent of the bureau's total collection.

Steel accounts for the biggest item in Harbour Centre's list, followed by non-grain bulks like coal, silica, gypsum, cement and iron ore. The revival of the local mining industry is also helping the port business, Sandejas added.

"We forecast a doubling of growth this year," Sandejas said. "We are constantly improving our operations. Our turnaround time is the fastest in the industry."

For instance, 60 metric tons of steel usually required 10 days to unload. But in Harbour Centre, it would take them only about 4 days, she said.

She said the port already accounted for 90 percent of the non-containerized business.

Sandejas said that the port would provide a 50 percent savings for importers, largely due to productivity and port efficiency.

"Our fees are benchmarked on PPA rates," she said. "But given our efficiency, we could provide huge savings for our customers."

The Port of Manila collects a little over P4 billion a month, according to Lina.

Harbour Centre contributes an average of P500 million a month to the Customs collection.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of April 29, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	5,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	25	26	25	26	414,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	48	48	47.5	48	189,800
China Banking Corp.	660	670	660	670	1,860
Citystate Savings Bank	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	2,000
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.64	0.66	0.64	0.66	1,370,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	46	47	46	47	86,200
International Exch. Bank	18	18	18	18	173,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	31.5	31.5	31	31.5	441,500
Philippine National Bank	29	33	29	33	56,400
Union Bank of the Phil.	28	28	26.5	26.5	35,600
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
First Abacus Financial	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	20,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2440	2450	2440	2450	640
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1	1	1	1	216,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1620	1645	1620	1645	1,250
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13.5	13.5	13.25	13.5	131,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1	1.08	1	1.08	4,400,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	810	815	810	810	83,760
Ipeople Inc.	3.85	3.85	3.75	3.75	36,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.048	0.05	0.048	0.05	300,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.04	2.04	2.04	2.04	3,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3	3.1	3	3.1	3,029,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.42	1.42	1.4	1.4	42,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1390	1390	1375	1380	294,260
Philweb Corp.	0.018	0.019	0.018	0.019	40,500,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	16	16.5	16	16.5	9,500
Manila Electric Co. B	22	22.25	22	22.25	126,200
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6	6.1	6	6.1	4,265,000
Petron Corp.	3.25	3.35	3.25	3.25	407,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.14	1.14	1.12	1.12	100,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.74	1.78	1.74	1.78	313,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	2,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	6.8	7.3	6.8	7.3	1,042,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	100,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	50,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.52	0.55	0.52	0.54	1,170,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	2.6	2.75	2.6	2.75	844,000
Republic Cement Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	20,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	100,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.25	3.2	3.25	21,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5	170,100
San Miguel Corp. A	57.5	58	57	58	107,200
San Miguel Corp. B	82.5	83	82	83	184,100
Vitarich Corp.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.28	1,760,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	6.6	6.9	6.6	6.9	10,130,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.25	4.4	4.25	4.4	84,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.03	0.032	0.03	0.031	47,700,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.88	1.94	1.86	1.94	599,000
APC Group Inc.	0.3	0.32	0.3	0.31	1,100,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.38	0.38	0.36	0.36	100,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	15,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.17	7,420,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.93	0.97	0.91	0.96	26,210,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.16	0.18	0.16	0.18	100,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.225	420,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.27	0.3	0.27	0.28	7,850,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	2.55	2.7	2.55	2.6	9,249,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.049	0.049	0.045	0.045	1,200,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	100,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.9	150,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	42.5	43.5	42.5	43	139,100
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	20,000
Global Equities, Inc.	0.08	0.0875	0.08	0.085	2,500,000
Ionics Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	10,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.3	3.35	3.3	3.35	165,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.22	1.28	1.22	1.28	2,603,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.33	0.36	0.33	0.35	113,080,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	100,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	200,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	50,000
SM Investments Corp.	250	250	249	250	1,220,350
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.21	0.22	0.205	0.22	4,860,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.135	0.2	0.135	0.2	80,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.24	0.26	0.24	0.26	210,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Active Alliance Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	10,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	4,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.36	1.46	- 1.36	1.46	40,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.8	0.91	0.8	0.91	110,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.1	0.105	0.1	0.105	2,180,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.06	1.2	1.04	1.18	20,681,000
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	11	11	11	11	1,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.87	0.87	0.87	0.87	90,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.46	1.54	1.46	1.52	869,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	13.25	13.5	13	13	761,900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Q	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.6	7.8	7.6	7.8	5,273,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.86	0.89	0.86	0.89	40,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.24	0.26	0.24	0.26	4,850,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.2	0.25	0.2	0.25	600,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.38	1,820,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.38	1.4	1.36	1.36	5,713,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.3	102,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.22	0.22	0.21	0.21	270,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.61	10,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	10,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	4.55	4.55	4.55	4.55	40,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	930,000
SM Development Corp.	1.64	1.64	1.62	1.62	104,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.4	7.5	7.3	7.4	10,560,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	.0.0085	15,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.8	30,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.2	9.4	9	9	117,000
Benguet Corp. B	29.5	32	29.5	32	26,300
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	40,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.35	0.35	0.33	0.33	4,090,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	7,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.021	0.022	0.021	0.021	81,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.007	43,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	130,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.04	1.1	1.04	1.08	3,035,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	33	33.5	33	33	4,219,200
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	80,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0065	0.007	0.0065	0.007	20,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.15	0.17	0.15	0.165	13,260,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	2,993,250	48,270,000.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	321,922,270	1,075,876,385.00
PRO	30,322,000	129,544,320.00
Mining	158,387,500	148,342,540.00
OIL	113,260,000	2,755,450.00
GRAND TOTALS :	626,885,020	1,404,788,695.00
Bank & Fin Svc	545.08	UP 3.28
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,906.45	UP 30.62
PRO	704.18	UP 9.97
Mining	2,735.64	UP 12.90
OIL	2.56	UP 0.05
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	1,137.27	UP 12.49
Composite	1,854.63	UP 16.47

NO. OF ADVANCES: 63, NO. OF DECLINES: 15, NO. OF UNCHANGED: 39, NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 117, NO. OF TRADES: 3,166

DOF cool to exempting wage earners from tax

From page B1

The bill, which seeks to reform the VAT system by increasing the rate from 10 to 12 percent and lifting several exemptions, is still pending in the bicameral conference committee of Congress, already beyond the April 30 target of Malacañang. The VAT bill, considered the major revenue-raising agenda of the Arroyo administration, is estimated to generate more than P65 billion in incremental revenues a year for the government.

President Arroyo announced on Labor Day that minimum wage earners would have a pay increase. The wage adjustment would somehow ease the workers' burden caused by rising commodity prices and government moves to increase taxes.

The President directed the wage boards to determine the amount of increase on or before June 1.

The DOF said the current definition by the National Tax Research Center said that minimum wage earners are those earning an annual income of P64,000 and below.

Militant labor groups were actually asking for a P125 daily across-the-board increase for workers in the private sector and a P3,000 increase in the monthly salaries of public workers.

Michelle V. Remo

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Camp John Hay	Pls Call	
Canyon Woods	140,000	
Capital Hills	100,000	
Cebu Country Club	Pls Call	
Celebrity Sports	130,000	100,000
City Sports Club Cebu	Pls Call	
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	300,000/350,000*/Pls Call**	
Eastridge A/B*	130,000	65,000*
Forest Hills A/B*/C**	130,000/260,000**	110,000/160,000*
Luisita Golf	310,000	
Manila Golf Corporate	Pls Call	11,500,000
Manila Golf Individual	Pls Call	
Manila Polo	Pls Call	2,000,000
Manila Southwoods A/B*	Pls Call*	380,000/700,000*
Manila Yacht Club	360,000	
Makati Sports Club	210,000	
Metropolitan Club A/B*	120,000/150,000*	100,000
Mimosa C2/C3*		200,000*
Mt. Malarayat A/B*	180,000	150,000/285,000*
Orchard A/B*/C**	230,000*	160,000/210,000*/540,000**
Puerto Azul	60,000	
Riviera Golf A/B*/C**	120,000/150,000*	100,000**
Riviera Sports	45,000	
Rockwell Leisure Club	Pls Call	
Royale Tagaytay CC	80,000	
Sherwood A/B*/C**	70,000/110,000*/160,000**	
Splendido	-	250,000
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	1,200,000/1,600,000*	Pls Call
The Palms Country Club	500,000	
Tagaytay Country Club	Pls Call	370,000
Tagaytay Highlands	Pls Call	
Tagaytay Midlands	250,000	850,000
The Country Club	2,000,000	
Valle Verde Ind	120,000	
Valley Golf	200,000	
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SEC looks into Pacific Plans case

From page B1

Before that, tuition increases were limited to 10 percent a year.

PPI said that without the spin-off, the whole company would have been affected and the problem would have been worse.

"Everything about the case is being looked into, and we are studying our options," Lukban said.

He declined to give a firm answer when asked by reporters about possible fraud and possible sanctions against the pre-need firm.

The shift in the government's tuition policy doomed the open-ended plans and it was because of this that PPI stopped selling them in 1992.

In a statement, PPI cited an actual example: "We were paid a total of P13,800 on installment and got the last payment in 1995. But we had to pay from 2001 to 2005 a total of P240,000 for a four-year nursing course in Far Eastern University. It is worse when exclusive schools are involved."

To show the sharp increases in tuition, PPI said that under its FEU example, it paid the school P27,710 in school year 2001-02; P45,184 the following year; P75,481 in 2003-04, and P91,540 for the current schoolyear.

"No company can make P13,800 earn enough to match the gallop in tuition increases. One semester's benefit claim alone exceeds the total payments made by the planholder," PPI said.

"To cover these increases alone, we must earn 50-percent compounded each year for 10 years. And we didn't have 10 years, let alone the 50-percent income," it said.

The company said that when it spun off the fixed-value plans to Lifetime Plans last August, its objective was to put PPI back on its feet.

"We thought we could make it work. We even have a product that other pre-need companies think is excellent. We wanted to outsource everything to keep expenses down," PPI said.

Asia stocks gain after oil's slide, Wall St. rise

RISING CHINESE AMBITION A Chinese man checks a laptop in front of a Lenovo sign at a computer shop in Beijing. Lenovo Group Ltd. and IBM on May 1 said they had closed a groundbreaking deal in which China's largest computer company acquired IBM's personal computer business, marking the rising ambition of Chinese companies to become global brands. The new Lenovo will move its headquarters to New York from Beijing and seek to fuse executives from China and the United States. REUTERS

SINGAPORE—A slide in oil prices to below $50 a barrel and solid gains on Wall Street at the end of last week lifted most Asian share markets on Monday.

The yen pulled back from six-week highs against the dollar as talk cooled that China was about to relax the yuan peg, and after reports that North Korea may have fired a missile into the Sea of Japan.

Oil prices fell more than 1 percent, hovering at a 10-week low just above the $49 mark, as higher OPEC supply and swelling crude stocks in the United States weighed on the market.

By 0615 GMT, US light crude dropped 59 cents to $49.13 a barrel.

"It's a split market for the time being," said Tony Nunan at Mitsubishi Corp. in Tokyo. "Short term, it's definitely weak if you look at stocks and Opec production. But medium term, three to six months out, it looks like supply could be really tight."

Tokyo stocks ended flat at 11,002.11, with investors selling export stocks such as Honda Motor, which fell nearly 1 percent, and Fujitsu Ltd., down 1.4 percent.

Japan's stock markets were closed on Friday and will be shut again on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for the "Golden Week" holidays.

Markets in South Korea and Australia were open, though most others in Asia were closed for the Labor Day holiday.

MSCI's index of non-Japan shares had gained 0.31 percent.

Seoul shares jumped 0.78 percent, led by industrials such as steel maker POSCO Co. Ltd.

But gains were capped amid worries about data showing slower-than-expected export growth, and ahead of a rate-setting meeting of the US central bank on Tuesday.

Australia's share market was also about three quarters of a percent higher, buoyed by resource stocks and encouraging company outlooks on Wall Street.

North Korea's suspected missile test stymied a rally in the yen that had pushed it to a three-month peak versus the euro.

An official Chinese report on Friday said deepening reforms had created the conditions for China to revalue the yuan.

That report, coupled with a surprise rise in the yuan's value beyond its tightly regulated trading band on Friday that was later called an error, added to already intense speculation that China will soon loosen the yuan's peg.

Buying the yen is a popular bet on a near-term move by China to loosen its tight 8.28 peg to the dollar.

The deregulation is expected to spark a broad rally in Asian currencies.

Although most analysts now don't expect a yuan revaluation until the second half of the year, dealers said that caution was the watch-word.

The dollar bought around 105.30 yen, up about 0.6 percent from 104.75 yen in late US trading.

The US currency shed 1.3 percent versus the yen on Friday. The euro was little changed at $1.2855.

The euro bought around 135.30 yen, recovering from a three-month low around 134.80 on Friday.

US Treasuries were mostly flat in Asian trade before a survey of factory activity kicks off an event-packed week, including an expected interest rate rise.

Investors will be closely watching the Fed's statement after its policy meeting on Tuesday to see whether central bankers drop the word "measured" in describing the pace of future moves.

The Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) is widely expected to raise its funds rate to 3.0 percent from 2.75 percent after the meeting, in what would be its eighth straight quarter-percentage point increase. *Reuters*

US Fed seen to move again on small increase in interest rates

WASHINGTON—Fighting inflation is the Number One job these days for the US Federal Reserve.

With energy and other prices rising, policy-makers are expected to keep nudging up short-term interest rates—for now.

At its meeting Tuesday, the Fed is poised to raise the federal funds rate by one-quarter of percentage point, to 3 percent. That would be the eighth such increase since June 2004, when the central bank began its campaign to tighten credit.

Inflation is creeping higher, but the economy recently has shown signs of hitting a rough patch. So Fed Chair Alan Greenspan and his colleagues have to tread lightly.

"They now have to walk a very tight line between growth and inflation," said Lynn Reaser, chief economist at Bank of America Capital Management.

To control inflation, the Fed must stick to rate increases while balancing that goal with trying to keep the economy on a solid growth path, Reaser said.

Higher rates are a defense against an outbreak of inflation. But when it is more expensive to borrow money, some consumers and businesses are less inclined to spend and invest.

Over the first three months of the year, the economy grew at a 3.1 percent annual rate, the worst performance in two years. Analysts place much of the blame on soaring energy prices, which restrained spending by individuals and companies.

Some economists believe economic growth in the April-to-June period could prove even worse.

The current climate probably will not do much to energize the labor market, analysts said. Employers added just 110,000 jobs in March, the fewest in eight months. April's employment report comes out Friday. Economists predict it will show that 170,000 jobs were created.

Inflation, meanwhile, is climbing. Driven by expensive gasoline and energy products, overall consumer prices jumped by 0.6 percent in March, the biggest increase since October.

Even more troubling to economists was the 0.4 percent rise in core inflation—a gauge that excludes energy and food prices. That was the largest increase in two-and-a half years.

At the Fed's previous meeting, on March 22, policy-makers struck a hawkish tone about inflation, saying companies were finding it easier to raise prices.

Reaser is among the economists who believe the Fed probably will increase interest rates through much of this year. Other analysts think the Fed might pause in the summer, especially if growth slows even more than anticipated.

If the Fed goes ahead Tuesday with a quarter of a percentage point increase in the interest that banks charge each other on overnight loans, then the prime lending rate at commercial banks would rise by a corresponding amount, to 6 percent. The prime rate is used for many short-term consumer and business loans. *AP*

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China issues guidelines for sale of state shares

BEIJING—China has issued long-awaited guidelines for the sale of non-tradeable state-owned shares in listed companies, according to a statement on the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) website.

The rules, which take effect immediately, will allow a small number of companies to take part in a trial program of state share sales.

The CSRC and two thirds of public share holders will have to approve the conversion of state shares into publicly traded stock.

Buyers of state shares will not be able to sell them again for a year, and after that will be restricted to sales of a maximum of five percent of a company's equity in each 12-month period.

Under the new rules, future initial public offerings (IPOs) will no longer have a non-tradeable share portion and individual listed companies will be able to decide on how the state shares are sold.

The CSRC admitted that state shares are "a big obstacle" to improving China's stock market and said the issue must be resolved in a "proper manner."

Non-tradeable state shares in more than 1,200 listed companies account for 66 percent of a 3.52 trillion yuan (424 billion dollars) market capitalization.

The CSRC said it will select companies to participate in the trial program after considering the opinions of shareholders and the recommendations of listed companies' sponsors.

It added that the sale of state shares can only happen when "the market conditions are ripe" and IPO prices are stable.

The issue has dogged the stock market for years after initial plans to sell the state-owned shares sparked near panic among investors fearful their holdings would be massively diluted by a flood of new stock.

The authorities suspended the plan in 2001. But the stock market has never fully regained its footing and shares currently languish at six-year lows.

The markets are closed this week for a national holiday. *AFP*

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BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND BID

The **Olongapo City Government** through the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract:

1. Name of Contract : PROPOSED DESILTING OF KALAKLAN RIVER (STA. 0+000 to STA. 0+650)
   Location : KALAKLAN, OLONGAPO CITY
   Brief Description : EXCAVATION AND HAULING OF SPOILS
   Approved Budget of the Contract (ABC) : P10,000,000.00
   Contract Duration : 150 CALENDAR DAYS
2. Name of Contract : PROPOSED DESILTING OF KALAKLAN RIVER (STA. 0+650 TO STA. 1+950)
   Location : KALAKLAN, OLONGAPO CITY
   Brief Description : EXCAVATION AND HAULING OF SPOILS
   Approved Budget of the Contract (ABC) : P10,000,000.00
   Contract Duration : 150 CALENDAR DAYS
3. Name of Contract : PROPOSED DESILTING OF STA. RIVER (STA. 0+000 to STA. 1+400)
   Location : STA. RITA, OLONGAPO CITY
   Brief Description : EXCAVATION AND HAULING OF SPOILS
   Approved Budget of the Contract (ABC) : P10,000,000.00
   Contract Duration : 150 CALENDAR DAYS

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and equipment (listed in the Eligibility Forms) available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particular relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of the Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

BAC Activities	Schedule
1. Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	May 2-9, 2005
2. Issuance of Eligibility Forms	May 10-12, 2005
3. Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	May 13, 2005
4. Notice of Results of Eligibility Check	May 16, 2005
5. Issuace of Bid Documents	May 18, 2005
6. Pre-Bid Conference	May 20, 2005
7. Receipt and Opening of Bids	June 02, 2005

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at the **OFFICE OF THE CITY ENGINEER**, upon their submission of LOI, and upon their payment of a non-refundable amount of **P500.00 to the Treasurer's Office.** Prospective bidders shall submit the eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the said address. They may also obtain the results of the Eligibility Check by the BAC at the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for the bidding upon payment of non-refundable amount of P3,000.00 to the City Treasurer's Office.

The OLONGAPO CITY GOVERNMENT assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

Approved by:

(Sgd.) MERLITO J. MAJARUCON
BAC Secretariat

Noted:

(Sgd.) JOHNNY B. CHOA
BAC Chairman

(PDI–May 3, 2005)

MUNICIPALITY OF ECHAGUE
Echague, Isabela

Project Reference Number : ______
Name of the Project : Supply of Various Construction Materials

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Local Government Unit of Echague, Isabela, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project : Supply of Various Construction Materials
Location : Echague, Isabela
Approved Budget : P9,625,000.00
Delivery Period : 5 Days Upon Receipt of the Award

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	May 6, 2005 8:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M. Municipal Library
2. Pre-bid conference	May 10, 2005 2:00 P.M. Municipal Library
3. Opening of Bids	May 22, 2005 2:00 P.M. Municipal Library

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of TEN THOUSAND (P10,000.00) PESOS to the Municipal Cashier.

The Local Government Unit assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved:

(Sgd.) LEO G. LIGGAYU
General Services Officer V
& BAC Chairman

(PDI–April 26 & May 3, 2005)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

This is to inform the public that
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"For God so
loved the world,
that He gave
His only begotten
Son, that whoever
believes in Him
shall not perish but
have everlasting life."
John 3:16

Mary Joycelyn Dy Santiago

...passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on May 2, 2005 at the age of 39.

Her parents **Ramon** and **Lea**; her sister **Pauline**; her brothers **Bennett** and **Toteng**; her son **Ryan Jacob**; other relatives and friends, request the readers to join them in praying for her eternal happiness in heaven.

Her body lies in state at Chapel C, Christ the King Parish, Greenmeadows, Quezon City.

Interment will be on May 5, 2005 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life,
he that believes in Me, though he were dead,
yet shall he live." (Jn 11:25)

FR. AUGUSTINE HERBERS, SVD

of Ottensien, Germany

passed away to join his Creator
on April 29, 2005 in Quezon City
at the age of 91, with 69 years of religious life.

The Funeral Mass will be at the Christ the King Seminary Chapel, Quezon City, today, 03 May 2005 at 3:00 p.m.

Interment will follow.

"We come at last to realize, death breaks the earthly ties,
but love survives when grief has passed, for love can never die."

EDWIN de JOYA MAYOR

(of Romblon, Romblon)
May 17, 1946 – April 28, 2005)

We, Eddie's loving family wife, **Fem**; children **Ogie & Beth, Nene & Rex, Bing & Ching**; grandchildren **Lei & Josh**; brothers & sisters **Josing & Lucy, Willy & Nora, Rose & James, Junior, Perling & Yinkah**; nephews and nieces request the pious readers to join us in celebrating Eddie's reunion with his Creator.

His remains lie in state at **La Funeraria Paz**, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, May 7, 2005 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at La Funeraria Paz.

GOODNIGHT MOMMY ... - We miss you very much.

LOVINGLY REMEMBERED
On her 3rd Death Anniversary

BARBARA V. MEDINA

December 4, 1935 – May 3, 2002

Holy Masses will be held at the following churches:

Church of the Lord's Transfiguration *Angeles City, Pampanga*	6:00 AM
Sto. Domingo Church *Quezon City*	7:15 AM
Our Lady of Carmel Church *Proj. 6, Quezon City*	6:00 PM

Her family requests pious readers to pray
for the eternal repose of her soul.

I am
the way,
the truth
and the life.
No one
comes
to the
Father
except
through Me.
John 14:6

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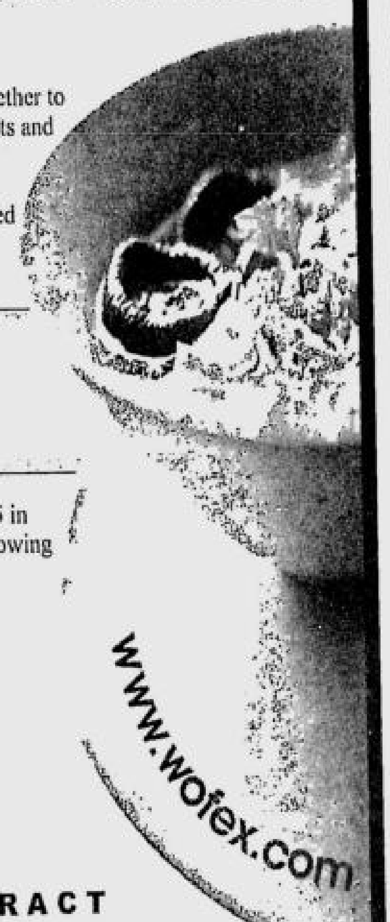

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
& WOFEX 2005
WORLD'S FOOD EXPO
August 3-6, 2005 World Trade Center

Greetings from the INQUIRER Classifieds and WOFEX 2005!

The Philippine Daily Inquirer and World's Food Expo 2005 are working together to once again come out with a very special supplement that will feature products and services in the food and beverage industry.

This special pull-out section of the Philippine Daily Inquirer is a tabloid sized section (7 cols x 30 cm) and is dedicated to feature the World's Food Expo and the country's growing food industry.

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This special industry supplement is scheduled for release on August 3, 2005 in line with the opening of WOFEX 2005. We are providing you with the following very special advertising rates :

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NFA to open more rice outlets in Metro Manila

IN A bid to fully stabilize the supply of rice in the markets, especially in Metro Manila, the National Food Authority is opening more rice outlets as demand for the low-priced good quality NFA rice continues to increase. NFA-NCR regional director Jose Cordero has instructed his district managers to establish more Bigasan ni Gloria sa Palengke (BGP) outlets in every market in their respective areas. To make sure that supply of rice will not be hampered, deliveries will be made on staggered basis such as two to three deliveries in a week. Cordero also pointed out the importance of intensifying the deployment of rolling stores in depressed areas. He said that rolling stores will only sell the P16 per kilogram NFA rice and shall be deployed in more depressed areas to make sure that the public will ultimately benefit from the NFA's rice marketing programs.

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(Contract No. ADB/OAS-2005/025)

1. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), a multilateral development finance institution headquartered in Manila, Philippines, invites interested companies to apply for prequalification to bid for the provision of management services for engineering and food services supplies/equipment stores at ADB Headquarters Building, located at No. 6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Philippines.
2. The Contractor shall manage, operate and maintain the engineering and food services supplies, tools and equipment, and other engineering stores in the ADB premises. The scope of services is provided in detail in the Work Performance Statement to be given to interested applicants.
3. Prequalification documents may be obtained from the Procurement and Contracts Administration Section, Institutional Services Division, Office of the Administrative Services, Room 1636 South, at the above address, from **3 to 6 May 2005** on any working day (9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), upon presentation of the receipt of payment in cash or manager's check of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: Three Hundred (PhP300.00) at the ADB's Cash Room, Room G239W.
4. Applicants will be required to submit two copies (marked "Original" and "Copy") of applications for prequalification each in a sealed envelope, which must be delivered either by hand or by registered mail addressed to the Officer-in-Charge, Procurement and Contracts Administration Section, Room 1630 South, Institutional Services Division, Office of Administrative Services, Asian Development Bank, 6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, Philippines, not later than **4:30 P.M., 10 May 2005**, and be clearly marked "Application to Prequalify for the Provision of Management Services for Engineering and Food Services Supplies/Equipment Stores".
5. Only prequalified bidders shall be invited to participate in the bidding exercise to be conducted by ADB. Bid documents will be issued to prequalified bidders from **18 to 19 May 2005.**
6. This Invitation does not entail any commitment on the part of ADB, either financial or otherwise. Any cost of preparation of prequalification documents shall be borne solely by the applicant. ADB reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications for prequalification.

(Sgd.) **CÉCILE L.H.F. GREGORY**
Director, Institutional Services Division
Office of Administrative Services

Asian Development Bank ADB
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(PDI - May 2 & 3, 2005)

NFA offers premium pricing program for corn farmers

TO HELP corn farmers get better value for their crops, the National Food Authority has introduced its Corn Marketing Assistance Program for Industry Producers/ Users and Local Government Units (CMAPIPULGU) with the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the food agency and the local government unit of Candon City, Ilocos Sur. Simply dubbed Premium-Pricing Program for Corn, the program aims to increase the buying price for corn by adding a premium price from the LGU partner. NFA Assistant Administrator Ludovico Jarina said that the program is the first of its kind for corn farmers and Candon City has been identified as pilot province of the program. Under the program, the NFA shall procure corn from corn farmers organizations (CFOs) at the current government support price of P7 per kilogram plus the premium price offered by the buyers/LGUs and store them in designated warehouses. The NFA will provide free use of its warehouses for a maximum of two months.

However, a 1.5 percent carrying cost per month shall be charged to the buyer. Ilocos Sur representative Eric Singson has agreed to add a premium price of P1.25 from his Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) on top of the NFA's buying price of P7 per kilogram, raising the buying price to P8.25 per kilogram. Singson said the program will hopefully solve the intensive haggling for lower buying prices by some corn traders. He said the program will also help stabilize the price of corn. For more information on NFA marketing programs, please send inquiries via Text NFA through mobile number 0917-6210927.

JOB Market
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BUSINESS

Loan facility for public vehicles planned

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE DEPARTMENT of Transportation is planning to put up a loan facility for public utility vehicles using the road users' tax collection worth P7 billion.

This forms part of the relief package designed to help the public transport sector cope with the continuing increases in oil prices.

Transport Secretary Leandro Mendoza said his department was also considering reducing the fees and charges imposed by its attached agencies on PUVs despite a budget department order to hike fees to boost government revenue.

Mendoza said he had instructed the Land Transportation Office and the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board to review their menu of fees and charges. The LTO is one of the biggest revenue generating agencies of the government.

"If we need to reduce or even remove some of the fees, especially those affecting the viability of the transport industry, then we will do so," said the transport chief in an interview.

The Arroyo administration promised to draw up a relief package for transport groups after PUVs staged a crippling nationwide strike last April 18.

The LTFRB is set to grant the petition of jeepney groups for a fare hike from P5.50 to P8 this week, to be implemented 15 days upon approval.

The relief package, according to Mendoza, would be a more viable solution to the problem of the public transport sector, considering that increases in fuel prices were beyond the government's control.

Mendoza, a former jeepney operator, is urging transport groups to form cooperatives so they could avail themselves of the loan facility that the department would put up.

"We have the road users' tax collection to tap. Jeepney operators could also import their supplies and spare parts through the PITC (Philippine International Trading Corp.)

The road users' tax is collected from private and public vehicles yearly when they register with the LTO.

In exchange for the relief package, Mendoza asked transport groups to improve the quality of their service to encourage even people with cars to ride the PUVs and help ease traffic congestion in the metropolis. There are about 100,000 PUVs in Metro Manila and 1.2 million private vehicles. Each year, the number of vehicles on the road increases by about 7 percent.

"We need more roads but there is no room for expansion anymore. So what we should do is to manage traffic by encouraging more people to ride jeeps and buses," he said.

Uniform perks for ecozone firms proposed

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance said it would push for the adoption of a uniform incentives package for businesses operating in various economic zones.

This, according to Finance Undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan, is aimed at making a policy shift in attracting investments.

"Instead of enticing investors through the granting of more tax incentives, an economic zone should encourage investments through other factors, like ensuring a healthy regulatory environment," he said.

"We want to make the incentives neutral. Investors should be looking at a location's innate competitiveness instead of the fiscal incentives," said Bonoan in a press briefing last week.

The DOF will push for the uniform incentive system when Congress starts discussions on a bill that seeks to rationalize fiscal incentives, Bonoan said.

The bill is expected to be the next priority of the Senate and the Lower House after the much-delayed VAT (value-added tax) bill.

Bonoan had expected the VAT bill, which sought to raise the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent and lift several exemptions, would be approved by the bicameral conference committee by the end of April. But the two chambers of Congress remained on a deadlock due to differences in their positions. The Lower House agrees to a VAT hike, while the Senate agrees to the lifting of the exemptions but wants the rate to remain at 10 percent.

At present, different fiscal incentives are being given to different economic zones in the country.

The planned rationalization of fiscal incentives hopes to trim down the huge revenue losses of the government arising from the granting of the tax perks, ranging from income tax holidays to duty-free importation privileges.

Earlier estimates showed the government has been losing more than P300 billion in potential revenue a year due to the granting of incentives to businesses.

Aside from harmonizing the incentives granted by various special laws, the plan to rationalize fiscal incentives will also cover the adjustments in the incentives granted by the Board of Investments (BOI).

The DOF will be tasked to oversee the harmonization of the incentives granted by special laws, while the BOI will be responsible for reforming the incentives to businesses registered with it.

Under the BOI's rationalization plan, the now yearly Investment Priorities Plan (IPP) will be made effective for three years. IPP is the list of government-preferred investment areas. The objective of stretching the effectivity of the IPP is to ensure the financial stability of firms enjoying the fiscal perks before the incentives are removed.

Mapua may accept PPI plans for tuition payment

MAPUA Institute of Technology is considering accepting the fixed-value plans of Pacific Plans beneficiaries as payment during enrollment.

Ernesto Garcia, president of Pacific Plans, said this was one of the options being studied by the Yuchengco Group of Companies to further extend assistance to PPI planholders. Mapua and Pacific Plans are both member-companies of YGC.

"We don't have the details yet but this looks promising. Everything will depend, however, on whether or not the court will approve our petition for rehabilitation," he said.

The fixed-value plans will be issued only after a Makati court has approved PPI's petition for rehabilitation.

Earlier, Garcia said Pacific Plans has been negotiating with financial institutions to put up a liquidity window that would buy the plans from planholders who need immediate cash.

"We are also thinking of ways to make this acceptable to other schools. We really want to be of help and we are trying out innovative ways to do this," he added.

The pre-need company went to court last month to file for rehabilitation, saying it was running out of cash and might not be able to meet future claims, but added it has more assets than liabilities.

Its assets though are in the form of government-guaranteed bonds with a face value of $52 million that would mature in July 2010. If sold now, they would fetch P550 million less than if redeemed at maturity.

To avoid this loss, PPI's fixed-value plans would also be redeemable shortly after the government bonds do in 2010.

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Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

MONDAY **ARTS & BOOKS** ● TUESDAY **FITNESS** ● WEDNESDAY **2BU** ● THURSDAY **FOOD** ● FRIDAY **FASHION & BEAUTY**

Non-diet approach to weight loss

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

WHAT is the best diet for losing weight? None. The only sure way to permanent weight loss is to make exercise and sensible eating habits parts of your life.

At best, even "good" diets are a temporary measure. At worst, severe restrictive diets can be unhealthy. People who make dieting a lifestyle can become obsessed with becoming thin "at any cost" and often find that they've lost their emotional well-being, too, according to Greg Phillips and Gail Johnston, authors of "Redefining Success with Healthy Eating" (American Council on Exercise Certified News).

They say success can only come when your food and exercise choices are based on reasonable, realistic and pleasurable actions that can be maintained for a lifetime.

This has been called the "non-dieting" approach to weight management. It is not new and it is promoted by many weight loss experts.

Eight beliefs

According to Phillips and Johnston, you can lose weight without dieting by understanding the following eight beliefs:

- There is no such thing as being on or off a diet.

Being on a diet implies that one day you will get off the diet and then will be back to square one—the lifestyle and eating habits that made you overweight.

People have told me that the thought of being on a diet makes them hungry and want to eat everything in sight. I agree. It happened to me when I was still stuck in Diet Fantasy Land. Phillips and Johnston say it is better to adopt a way of life with healthier habits that work for you rather than use a plan imposed by someone else.

- There is no right or wrong way to eat.

Healthy eating is all about moderation and balance. Phillips and Johnston say there are bound to be times when something tastes so good you eat beyond fullness. On the other hand, your schedule can get so busy you miss a meal or snack. That's normal.

However, they warn that starving or overeating as a regular pattern is emotionally and physically debilitating. A lifetime eating plan is one that allows for the curves life throws your way. It includes all the foods you normally eat. And it produces a secure and comfortable feeling that food is not your enemy.

- There are no good foods or bad foods.

You are not a saint or sinner for eating certain foods. There is room in a healthy diet for a chocolate bar—what matters is how often and how much.

Phillips and Johnston say the greatest barrier to adopting healthy eating habits is guilt. The scenario goes something like this: You feel so guilty for eating a slice of pizza that you say, "Oh, what the heck. I might as well 'sin' all the way and have four more slices."

- If you're not satisfied with the way you're eating, there's probably something else going on.

Our eating habits are about hunger but not always the physical kind. There are other kinds of "hunger" that we try to satisfy with food—stress, boredom, depression, anger, etc.

Phillips and Johnston say you can stop destructive eating patterns by figuring out what situations, emotions or stressors make you overeat. Pay attention to when, where, what and how you eat.

- You don't need to cook and eat every meal at home in order to eat healthfully.

You can eat out and still eat healthy. The secret is to learn to make wise food decisions. The goal, according to Phillips and Johnston, is to strike a balance between foods you desire for taste and those you need for health.

- Small changes make a big difference.

Making small changes, like cutting half the amount of mayonnaise in your sandwich, can make a difference in the long run.

Phillips and Johnston say when it comes to making successful long-term change, every small change you make adds up. For example, drinking water instead of beverages with sugar can help you lose several pounds in one year.

- Eating should be a pleasurable experience.

Forcing yourself to eat "diet" food you despise will only make you unsatisfied and may lead to an eating binge. Eating is one of the great pleasures in life. Some say even greater than sex. However, this does not give you a license to become a glutton. The key is moderation and balance.

- People often say they do not have the time, money or desire to go to a gym.

But there are so many ways to become fit. Choose the activity you enjoy most and you will find that you can do it for a lifetime. As Phillips and Johnston put it, you will "play the game" on your own terms.

How they can work for you

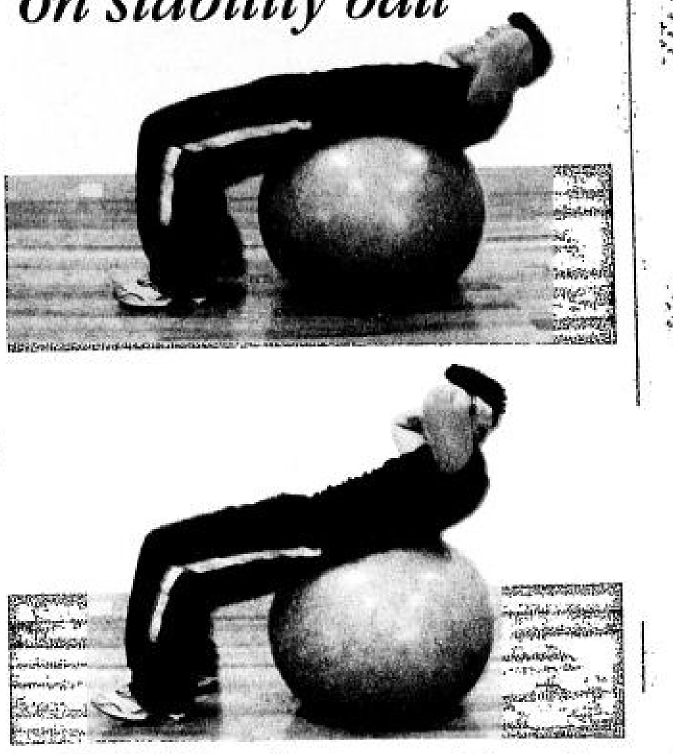
Phillips and Johnston admit it takes time, practice and patience to eliminate unproductive thoughts and actions. They say you can help yourself along this "unlearning" process to achieve better health by doing the following:

- Focus on the process, not the end result. Take it one day at a time.
- Focus on your habits, not your weight. It was your habits that got you overweight in the first place. Concentrate on changing those habits and you will lose the weight.
- Gauge your progress by your new healthy habits and attitudes and not by how much weight you are losing.
- Realize that there are always reasons why you do the things you do. Your challenge, according to Phillips and Johnston, is to discover what the reasons are for behaviors like overeating.
- Develop a new language of self-acceptance and empowerment. Don't demand perfection from yourself because attempts to be perfect only lead to failure.
- Trust yourself to know what's best for you.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info.

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Flat crunch on stability ball



STRENGTHENS abdominal muscles

Equipment:

Stability ball

Exercise technique:

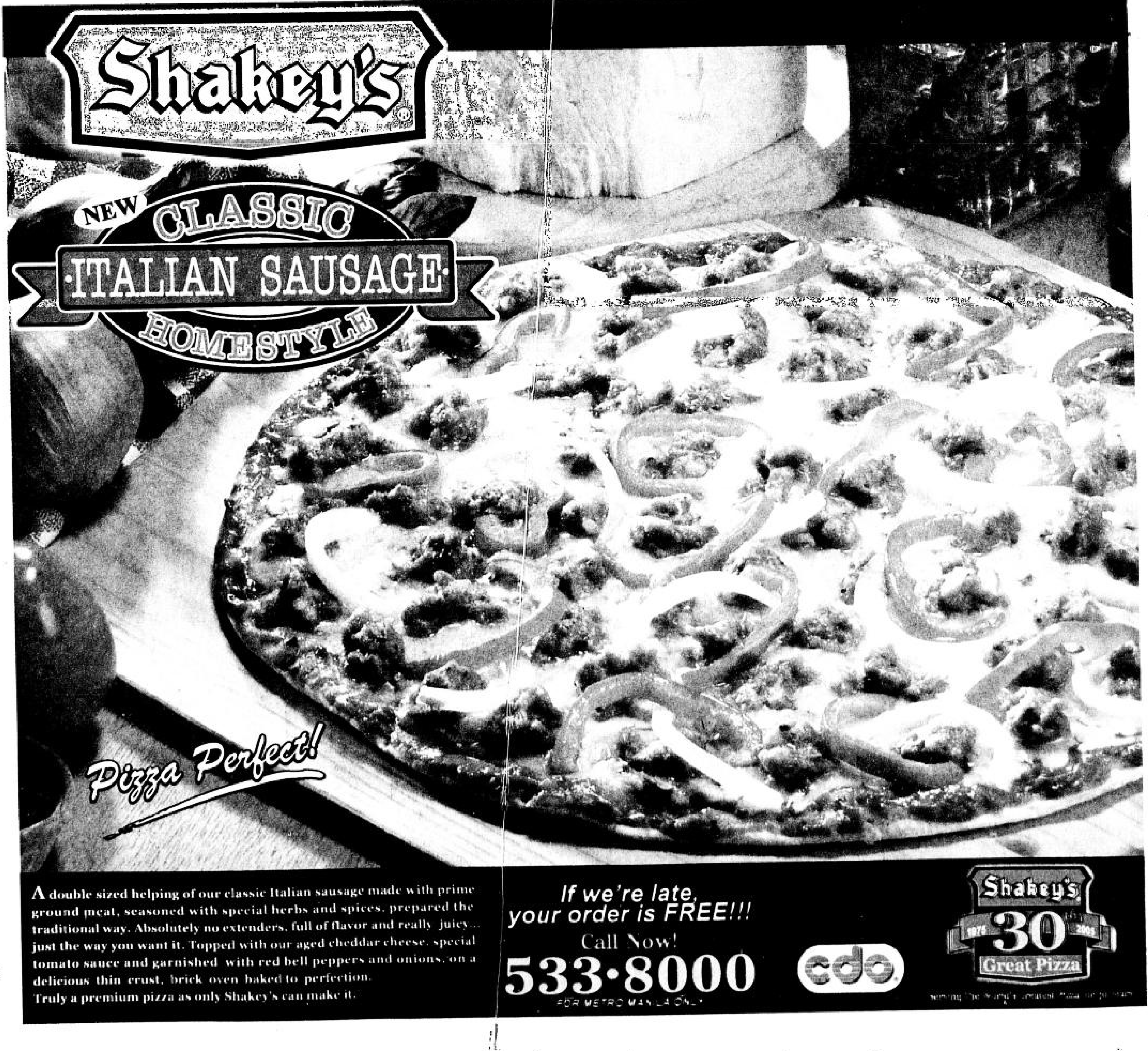
1. Start by sitting on the ball with your legs hip width apart.
2. Slowly lower yourself into a flat position by walking your feet forward while you simultaneously lean backwards.
3. Once the ball is behind your lower back, place your hands behind your head. This is the starting position.
4. Curl your upper body bringing the bottom of your ribcage towards the top of your hipbones.
5. Return to the starting position.

Performance tips:

1. Exhale as you curl up; inhale as you uncurl.
2. Your pelvis will not curl or tilt when you perform the flat crunch.
3. Place your fingers lightly at the sides of your head.
4. If you find the flat position too difficult, try the incline crunch.

Repetitions:

12 to 15 repetitions



A double sized helping of our classic Italian sausage made with prime ground meat, seasoned with special herbs and spices, prepared the traditional way. Absolutely no extenders, full of flavor and really juicy... just the way you want it. Topped with our aged cheddar cheese, special tomato sauce and garnished with red bell peppers and onions, on a delicious thin crust, brick oven baked to perfection.
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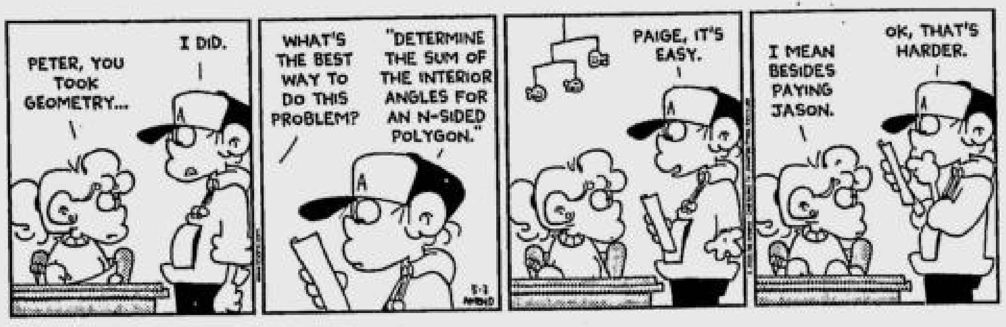
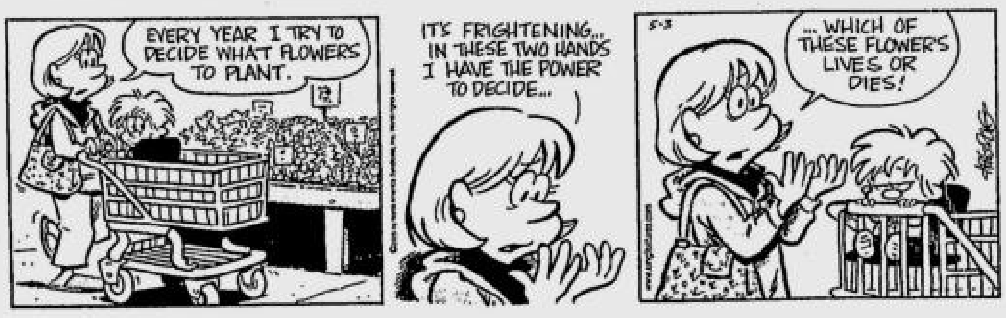
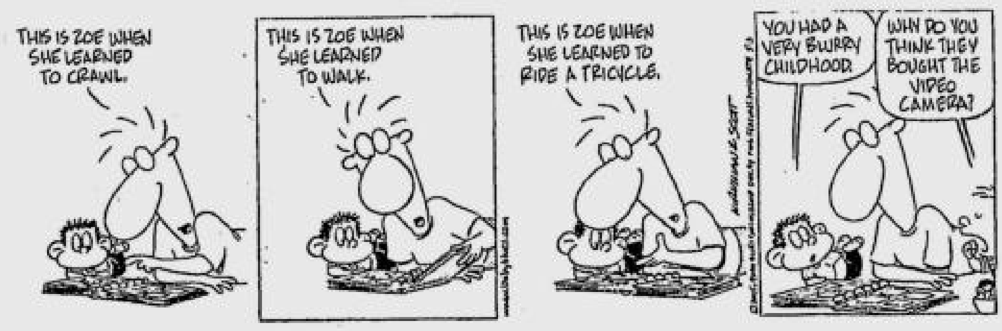
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


PETER, YOU TOOK GEOMETRY...
I DID.
WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO DO THIS PROBLEM?
"DETERMINE THE SUM OF THE INTERIOR ANGLES FOR AN N-SIDED POLYGON."
PAIGE, IT'S EASY.
I MEAN BESIDES PAYING JASON.
OK, THAT'S HARDER.
5-3 AMEND

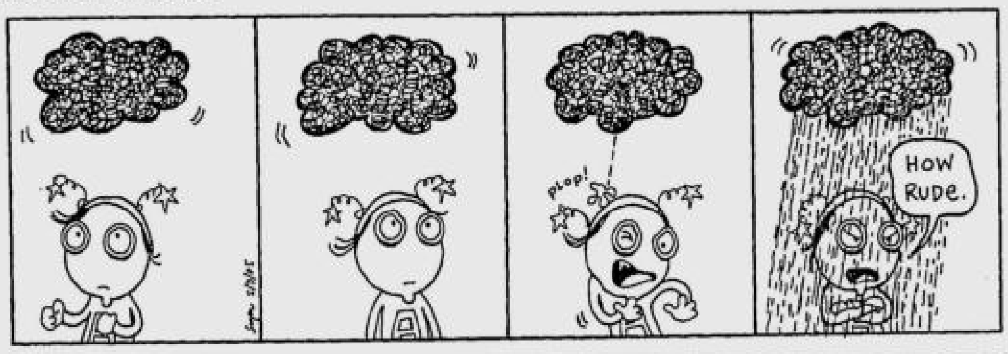
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


EVERY YEAR I TRY TO DECIDE WHAT FLOWERS TO PLANT.
IT'S FRIGHTENING... IN THESE TWO HANDS I HAVE THE POWER TO DECIDE...
5-3
... WHICH OF THESE FLOWER'S LIVES OR DIES!

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


THIS IS ZOE WHEN SHE LEARNED TO CRAWL.
THIS IS ZOE WHEN SHE LEARNED TO WALK.
THIS IS ZOE WHEN SHE LEARNED TO RIDE A TRICYCLE.
YOU HAD A VERY BLURRY CHILDHOOD.
WHY DO YOU THINK THEY BOUGHT THE VIDEO CAMERA?

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


plop!
HOW RUDE.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're very clever and charming. You're also insightful. You often have much to teach others. When times are tough, you make the decisions in the family. You have a talent for making people laugh. Your big ideas sometimes stun your family. The year ahead is social in a lucky way. New love can blossom!
Birthdate of: Golda Meir, Israeli prime minister; Frankie Valli, singer; John Lewis, jazz pianist/composer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a good day for practicality and thrift. You definitely want to get your money's worth. Today is good for financial planning and good for shopping.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You're sensible today. It's a good day to sign contracts or make agreements with others. You certainly know how to protect your best interests right now.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is a fine day for figuring out ways to secure your future in a practical, financial way. Listen to your instincts. You might deal with the government and large institutions today.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Listen to the advice of someone who is older or more experienced than you today. This person can help you—and perhaps introduce you to a new job or save you money in some way.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is an excellent day for serious thought about your long-term future. Talk to bosses, parents and employers. Think about what will benefit you in the long run.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Plans for travel, and also plans for publishing or higher education, are well-thought-out and practical today. Whatever you want to do is realistic and doable.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Today you might receive an inheritance, a gift or something that is long due to you. There's a kind of karmic payoff that can benefit you now.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is an excellent day to sign legal contracts and come to agreements with partners and close friends. You're sensible and realistic.

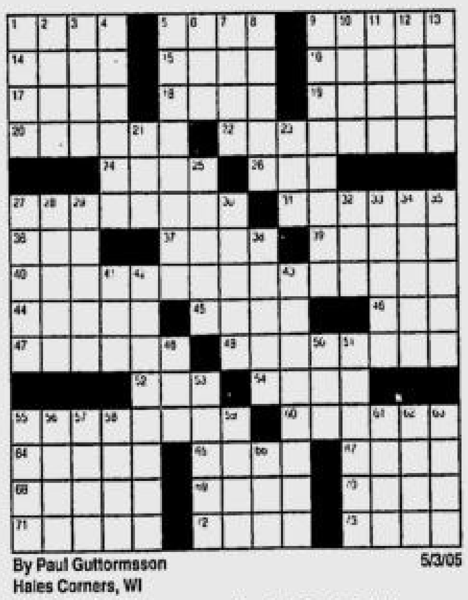
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You can get an enormous amount done at work today! You don't care about flash, fame and glory. Not today. You just want to get the job done in the least amount of time possible.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is an excellent day for parents to decide how to share the responsibilities and expenses of raising children. It's also a good day to make financial investments.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Repairs made to your home now will be worthwhile and certainly long-lasting. If you buy something for your home, it will be practical and a good value.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is a fortunate day in terms of financial speculation for you. Some kind of long shot could pay off. It's a good day to teach children, as well.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Paul Guttormsson
Hales Corners, WI
5/3/05

ACROSS
1 Science rooms
5 Crosspiece
9 Excessive self-esteem
14 Russian river
15 Bahrain ruler
16 Gaseous element
17 Web location
18 Hunter's quarry
19 Lubed
20 Bora Bora neighbor
22 Incompetent
24 Gershon of "Bound"
26 Actress Ruby
27 Carrot-tops
31 Liver, heart, etc.
36 William Tell's canton
37 Singer McCann
39 Keats poem
40 9A, 49A, 71A, 1D, 8D, 53D and 63D
44 Breadth
45 Disengage
46 Integers, briefly
47 Canadian capital
49 Excessive appetite
52 LPs' successors
54 Slaughter of baseball
55 Silly ones
60 "Our Man in Havana" writer
64 Intense hatred
65 Seep
67 H.S. student
68 Dishwasher cycle
69 Thunder god
70 Serb or Croat
71 Excessive ire
72 Garden tools
73 Catch sight of

DOWN
1 Excessive libido
2 Diva's song
3 Tub time
4 Yesteryear's snowmobile
5 Elton John's real first name
6 Ms. Thurman
7 "The Secret of __" (1982 animated film)
8 Excessive self-interest
9 In a fitting manner
10 Marsh bird
11 Run in neutral
12 Bucks' gals
13 Finishes
21 Draw
23 Delibes or Buscaglia
25 Ta-ta, Gigi
27 Rene of "Get Shorty"
28 Put up
29 Golf hole?
30 Colloquialism
32 Ford fuel
33 Protein acid
34 Sheer fabric
35 Smart-alecky
38 Befuddle
41 Antipollution org.
42 Rookie
43 Couch potatoes
48 Brouhaha
50 Rocky peak
51 Fly to avoid
53 Excessive laziness
55 One-third of a WWII movie?
56 Valhalla bigwig
57 Merciless villain
58 Detonator cord
59 London district
61 Reef predators
62 Tide type
63 Excessive resentment
66 Ms. Caldwell

Monday's Puzzle Solved

U	T	A	H	■	S	L	A	M	S	■	D	A	F	T
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■	■	■	X	I	I	■	■	■	L	R	G	■	■	■
P	H	D	■	D	E	C	R	I	E	D	■	S	O	L
A	U	R	A	■	S	H	I	N	■	E	L	W	A	Y
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T	A	M	P	A	■	N	E	R	O	■	O	R	E	O
F	N	S	■	B	E	A	S	T	L	Y	■	F	N	L
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Z	O	O	M	■	P	A	L	E	S	■	N	E	A	L
E	N	D	S	■	T	R	A	C	E	■	Y	E	L	P

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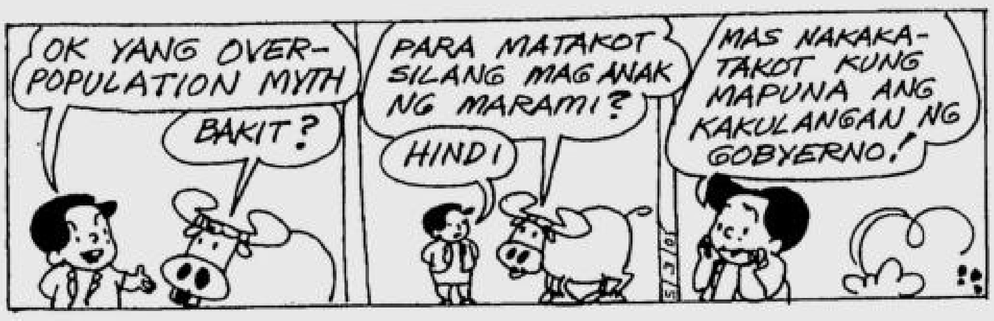
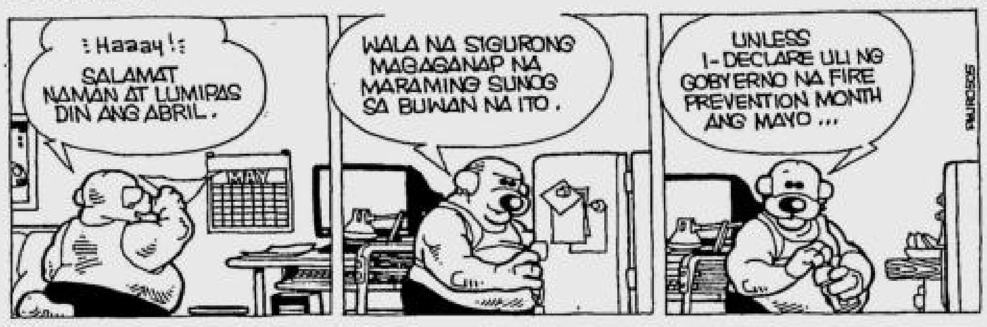
5/3/05

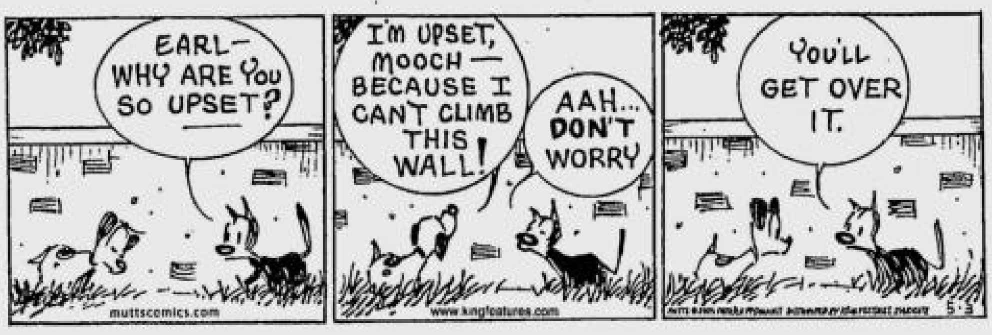
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


OK YANG OVER-POPULATION MYTH
BAKIT?
PARA MATAKOT SILANG MAG ANAK NG MARAMI?
HINDI
MAS NAKAKA-TAKOT KUNG MAPUNA ANG KAKULANGAN NG GOBYERNO!

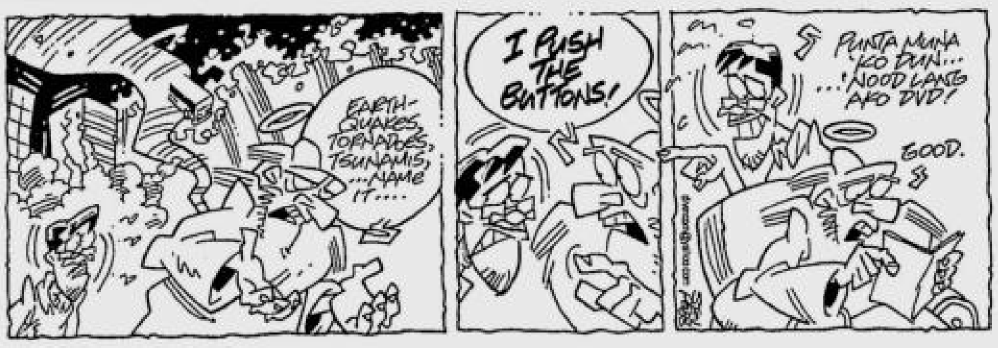
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


Haaay!
SALAMAT NAMAN AT LUMIPAS DIN ANG ABRIL.
MAY
WALA NA SIGURONG MAGAGANAP NA MARAMING SUNOG SA BUWAN NA ITO.
UNLESS I-DECLARE ULI NG GOBYERNO NA FIRE PREVENTION MONTH ANG MAYO ...

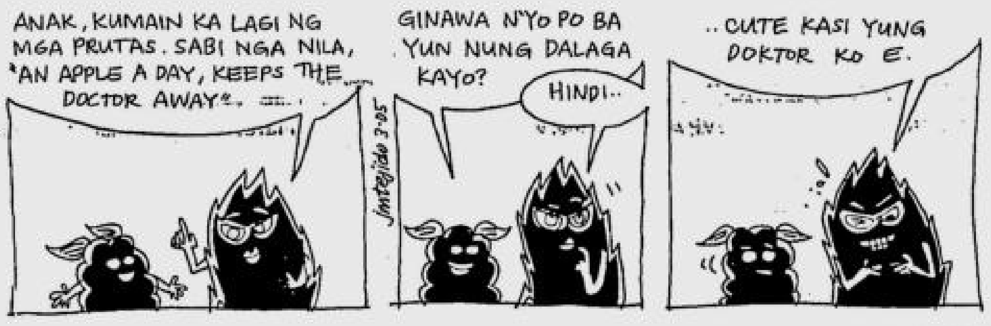
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


EARL— WHY ARE YOU SO UPSET?
I'M UPSET, MOOCH — BECAUSE I CAN'T CLIMB THIS WALL!
AAH... DON'T WORRY
YOU'LL GET OVER IT.
muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com
5·3

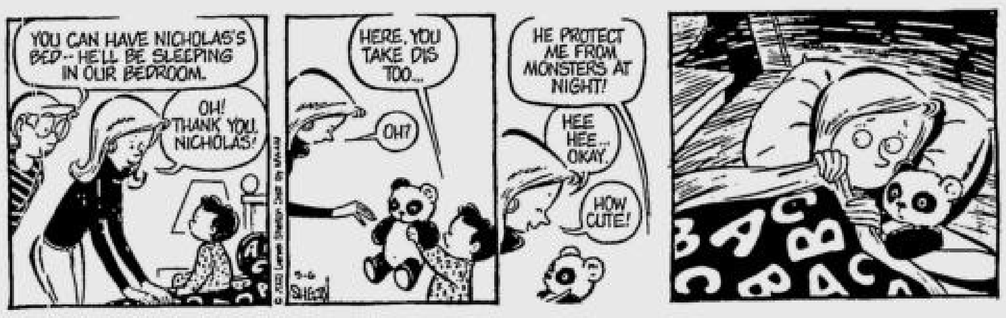
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


EARTHQUAKES, TORNADOES, TSUNAMIS, ...NAME IT....
I PUSH THE BUTTONS!
PUNTA MUNA KO DUN... ...NOOD LANG AKO DVD!
GOOD.

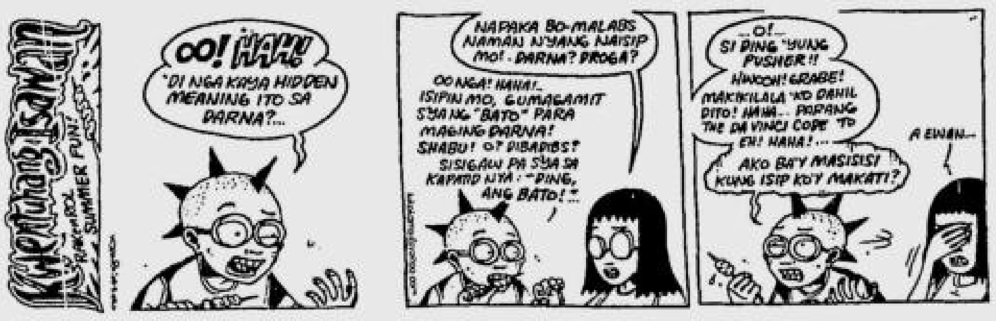
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ANAK, KUMAIN KA LAGI NG MGA PRUTAS. SABI NGA NILA, "AN APPLE A DAY, KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY".
GINAWA N'YO PO BA YUN NUNG DALAGA KAYO?
HINDI..
..CUTE KASI YUNG DOKTOR KO E.

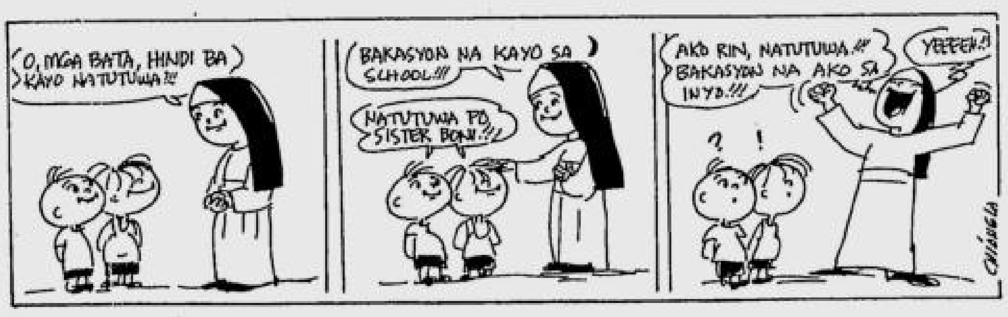
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


YOU CAN HAVE NICHOLAS'S BED-- HE'LL BE SLEEPING IN OUR BEDROOM.
OH! THANK YOU, NICHOLAS!
HERE, YOU TAKE DIS TOO...
OH?
HE PROTECT ME FROM MONSTERS AT NIGHT!
HEE HEE... OKAY.
HOW CUTE!

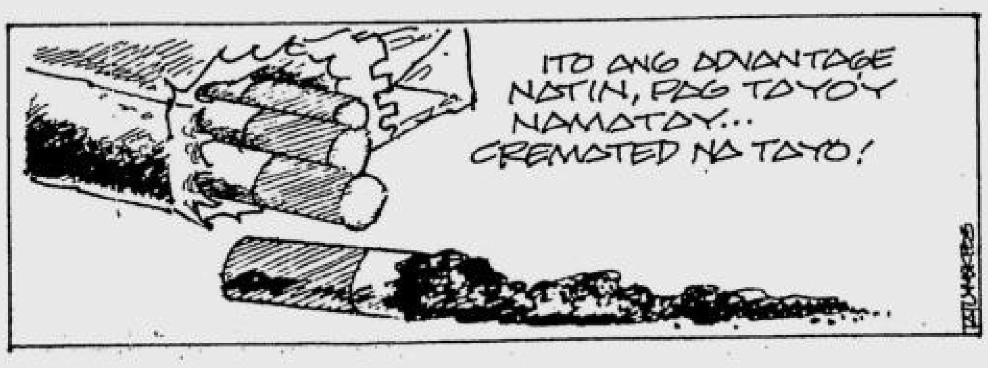
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


SUMMER FUN!
OO! HAH!
'DI NGA KAYA HIDDEN MEANING ITO SA DARNA?...
NAPAKA BO-MALABS NAMAN NYANG NAISIP MO! - DARNA? DROGA?
OO NGA! HAHA!.. ISIPIN MO, GUMAGAMIT SYA NG "BATO" PARA MAGING DARNA! SHABU! O? DIBADIBS? SISIGAW PA SYA SA KAPATID NYA: "DING, ANG BATO!"
...O!.. SI DING 'YUNG PUSHER!! HWOOH! GRABE! MAKIKILALA 'KO DAHIL DITO! HAHA... PARANG THE DA VINCI CODE 'TO EH! HAHA!...
A EWAN...
AKO BA'Y MASISISI KUNG ISIP KO'Y MAKATI?

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


O, MGA BATA, HINDI BA KAYO NATUTUWA!!!
BAKASYON NA KAYO SA SCHOOL!!!
NATUTUWA PO, SISTER BONI!!!
AKO RIN, NATUTUWA!!! BAKASYON NA AKO SA INYO!!!
YEEEEH!!
? !
CHIONGLO

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ITO ANG ADVANTAGE NATIN, PAG TAYO'Y NAMATAY... CREMATED NA TAYO!

CHAMPION of less fortunate children, Gina Lopez, with president of Stores Specialists, Inc., Nedy Tantoco; and soon to be mama, traffic-stopper Tessa Valdes

ADVERTISING executive of Salvatore Ferragamo Hong Kong Valina Moolchandani, regional marketing manager Cecilia Wong Tan and Emily Ip of Salvatore Ferragamo Hong Kong

POPULAR Jarlath Lynch of Makati Shangri-La Hotel, with Tina Hidalgo and husband, world-class photographer Rupert Jacinto

MOI with Rustan's Maritess Enriquez; U's hip designer, sultry beauty Katrina Tantoco, and fiancé Paolo Lobregat

COCOY Laurel and mother Celia Diaz Vda. de Laurel, with Pitoy Moreno

THREE BEAUTIES: Headturner Matet Chongson, with stunningly gorgeous Che Singson and eye-catching Jeanne Chua

INTERNATIONAL model Ilona Novacek, with international businessman Jacques Dupasquier; hip, young, beautiful and rich Celine Lopez, with good-looking Victor Basa

JOEY Antonio with wife Gilda Reyes and Rep. Imee Marcos

STORES Specialists, Inc. EVP Anton Huang, with Globe Platinum head Mayette Siasoco; man of the hour, James Ferragamo; and Arlene Amarante of Motorola

WESTIN Plaza's mega asset, Rose Libongco; with Metro Society's Mia Borromeo; Vision Express' pillar, Susan P. Joven; and stylish Margarita and husband, mega businessman Edward Delgado

SOFIA Zobel, with husband, good-looking business entrepreneur Patxi Elizalde

MANNY Padilla and wife, beauteous Mia Tambunting with her mother-in law, Doña Lala Vda. de Padilla

Best of two countries in one gala event

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using **Kodak** EasyShare system

DEFINITELY the most important and prestigious fashion event of the year, *palanggas*, was the Salvatore Ferragamo Spring/Summer Fashion Grand Gala at the Westin Philippine Plaza's gorgeous Harbor Garden.

Cosmopolitan Manille's most stylish and sophisticated gathered to meet the heir to the vast Ferragamo empire—the tall, dashing, blue-eyed Italian, **James Ferragamo.**

With Globe Platinum Specialists, Inc., Rustan celebrated with a unique fusion of local sounds and European style, *palanggas*, showcasing Ferragamo's firm belief "in globalization of cultures."

Some 800 elegantly dressed invitees gathered in the cocktail area, as Globe Platinum held a silent auction. Showcasing stunning cellular design and technology at center stage was the gorgeous Motorola Razr V3 Black, a marvelous beauty complemented by a 14-karat white gold bracelet studded with 60 1.5 pointer diamonds.

I never found out who won those auction pieces, *palanggas*. I know *moi* definitely didn't.

Dazzling

The beautiful and divinely elegant **Cherie Gil** dazzled us with her welcome and superb emceeing. She introduced Store Specialists, Inc. executive vice president, brilliant workasonic **Anton Huang**, who told us about this celebration of "a two-decade fruitful relationship bound by a mutual commitment of two companies to excellence and quality."

In his brief message, Anton H. also announced the evening's beneficiary, "The Philippine-Italian Association Endowment Fun promotes trade and cultural ties, by providing opportunities for our talented Filipino artists to study." Store Specialists, Inc. president and fairy godmother of several charitable organizations, **Nedy Tantoco**, who has merged style and substance, is also the president of the PIA.

Aprés **Anton Huang**'s short talk was a brief speech by Italy's foremost fashion representative, Signor James Ferragamo, grandson of the legendary Salvatorre Ferragamo. Toasting friendship were these two brilliant heirs, representing their *familles*' world-class enterprises, darlings.

A sumptuous six-course dinner was prepared by the Westin Philippine Plaza, whose dynamic top marketing head and secret weapon **Rose Libongco** was among those present. The fab, inimitable Grace Nono made a dramatic entrance as guests started on their dessert. She did colorful renditions of music that was so Filipino, yet appreciated as "world music."

Impressive

Next came the evenings grand moment, *palanggas*. An impressive collection of summer whites, beiges, and spring green and brown was presented by especially chosen top models, evidence that Ferragamo truly understands the needs and desires of today's discerning woman.

The men were treated to an amazing show of shirts in vibrant prints and solids, shoes in hazelnut and cream leather, all with Ferragamo's subtle trademark touches of class and comfort. Providing the background music was the well-applauded Makiling Ensemble.

It was time for the giveaways, bringing the smart set in full attention as Mr. Ferragamo was again called onstage as the show drew to a close. Globe Platinum head **Mayette Siasoco** expressed the group's appreciation for his presence by presenting him with a special gift from Globe Platinum.

Three winners of the must-have 3G quad-band Motorola, were called on stage to receive their brand new, chic cell phones. And, finally, a gift from the House of Salvatore Ferragamo was given out to a lucky member of the audience—a deluxe eye-catching red-orange stylish Cricket Peccary handbag from the Spring/Summer 2005 collection.

Generous winner

The stunningly beautiful **Kit Silverio Zobel** was one of the lucky winners of the fab cell phone, but she graciously donated it to another winner. Now that's what I call cool style, dahlings.

Naturellement, a grand happening like this brought out our town's well-heeled fashionable women who all looked their best.

And best among them in my book were definitely **Irene Marcos Araneta**, in a **Pepito Albert**; Kitkat Zobel, in a fantastic white ruffled blouse by **Anne Fonteyn** and black pants; **Gina Lopez**, elegant in a multi-colored outfit bv Silk Cocoon, natch. Stunningly dressed was gourmet par excellence and Tatler's best-dressed woman, **Sigalit Djemal**, in a cocktail outfit with a white lace, uneven skirt by **Patrice Diaz Ramos**; **Celine Lopez**, looking fab in **Rhett Eala**'s chic look of today; **Cherie Gil** in a drop-dead turquoise gown by Ferragamo, that showed off her richly golden tan at its best.

Tina Jacinto was in a gold and brown brocade by **Tina Jacinto** no less; vivacious **Annie Aylon** in brown with silver on her beaded skirt; gorgeous **Che Singson** in a fab olive green leafy printed cocktail outfit by Tracey Reese NY of Mix. **Otta Montinola** in pearl gray halter-neck, with an uneven skirt, was an eye-catcher. The Austrian ambassador's wife, tall, elegant **Irmgard Krepela**, was in a head-turning two-shade black ball gown; young beauty **Mia Dragon Floirendo** in a cucumber cool, celadon green layered chiffon cocktail wear. Pretty, pretty in pink by **Jojie Lloren** was attractive **Crickette Yu Tantoco**. Lastly but definitely not the least, elegant **Cessie Colayco** was in a wowl *tres* chic silver gray wrap and a black figure-hugging outfit that made me take a second look at her feminine bean-slim body, as she breezed by with her steady businessman **Santi Picornell**, *palanggas.*

Salvatore Ferragamo's unveiling of its Spring/Summer 2005 Collection proved that certain things were definitely meant to mix: the very best in Italian goods with the very best in Filipino culture.

As always, dahlings, Rustan's did it again with such panache.

WELL-DRESSED Sigalit Djemal and brilliant low-profile Luli Arroyo

RENOWNED cardiologist Dr. Randy Francisco with wife, woman of substance and Philippine Tatler's mega publisher Irene Martel F.

KITKAT Zobel and Tatler's editor in chief Anton San Diego

RENOWNED violinist Rony Rogoff with wife, stunning beauty Cherie Gil-Rogoff in a wow Ferragamo gown

ROD Cornejo, with Amb. Umberto Colesanti, Secretary Alberto Romulo, Sen. Franklin Drilon, Maritess Tantoco-Enriquez, Lovely Romulo, Flor Tarriela and Marilou Pineda

SOCIALITE Fe Rodriguez, with honorary consul of Monaco Fortune Ledesma; Amb. Christian Krepela; Peninsula Hotel's first couple, David Batchelor and wife Marilu Toda; and tall, elegant Madame Irmgard Krepela

SANTI Picornell, with Teresa Hernandez, Cessie Colayco, Ayala's Javi Hernandez and Vince Tanjutco

The Superstar is 35

SUPERSTAR, the original shoe with the popular rubber "shell" toe

FAMED toy designer Michael Lau's charismatic creations often wear Superstars, the shoes' simple yet timeless styling perfectly complementing the figures

ADIDAS is marking the 35th anniversary of the Superstar, one of the most celebrated shoes ever produced, by offering 35 models as diverse, creative and unique as the people who wore and continue to wear them.

Some styles will be created to honor a special place or time in the Superstar's history. Others will be specially designed in conjunction with Adidas' partners in music, art and fashion, and offered as limited, signature models.

Adidas' earlier basketball shoes—the All Round, Supergrip and Pro Model—inspired the Superstar's design. When the new model was created by Adi Dassler in 1969, no one expected it would make a leap from the basketball court to the dance floor, catwalk, stage and silver screen. Over the years, it has become a cultural fixture and timeless icon.

Produced in France, the Superstar was the first all-leather low top basketball shoe and one of the first to use the "herringbone" outsole.

In the United States, over 75 percent of basketball players were wearing the Superstar within a year of its introduction. The phenomenal acceptance was attributed to Superstar's being more than adequately equipped for basketball. It had the "shell toe" that protected the toes and the high-heel collar that protected the Achilles tendon.

In the next few years, the Superstar found its way into pop fashion. In 1986, when Run DMC recorded "My Adidas," hip-hop and Adidas remained forever linked.

Today, the Superstar is a favorite not only of hip-hop artists but Indie bands as well. It has spawned a whole family of shoes with the Superstar name and attitude, and is probably the most famous shoe silhouette in the world.

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What is AIDS and how is it different from HIV?

Human Immunodeficiency syndrome, also known as Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a global plague with cases reported worldwide. AIDS is the most severe manifestation of a clinical spectrum (syndrome) of diseases caused by infection with human immunodeficiency virus, also known as HIV. HIV infection that is left untreated will eventually lead to AIDS. This syndrome is described by the development of serious opportunistic infections and other life threatening manifestations resulting from progressive weakening of the body's immune system due to the suppression by the HIV.

The characteristic of HIV disease is the profound immunodeficiency (or weak immune system) resulting primarily from a progressive loss of T-lymphocytes, white blood cells which orchestrates the body's immune response. An HIV positive patient with a CD4 T-lymphocyte count greater than 200 is classified as having HIV infection. Once their CD4 falls below 200, they are then classified as having AIDS.

This week's answer to our feature question on AIDS was provided by our accredited doctor in Asian Hospital and Medical Center, ***Dr. Salvador Abad Santos.*** *Dr. Popeye, as his patients commonly address him, specializes in Internal Medicine. He is a graduate of Medicine from the University of the Philippines and finished his residency training for IM at the Summa Health System, North Eastern Ohio College of Medicine. From 1999 to 2002, he took Fellowship training for Infectious Diseases and Critical Care Medicine at the Detroit Medical Center in Michigan. He is also a Diplomate to both the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American Board of Infectious Diseases. MEDICard members can seek the consultation services of Dr. Santos every Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1 to 6 PM, Room 509 of AHMC.*

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

Nicky

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